CAPE BRETON TALES

BY

HARRY JAMES SMITH

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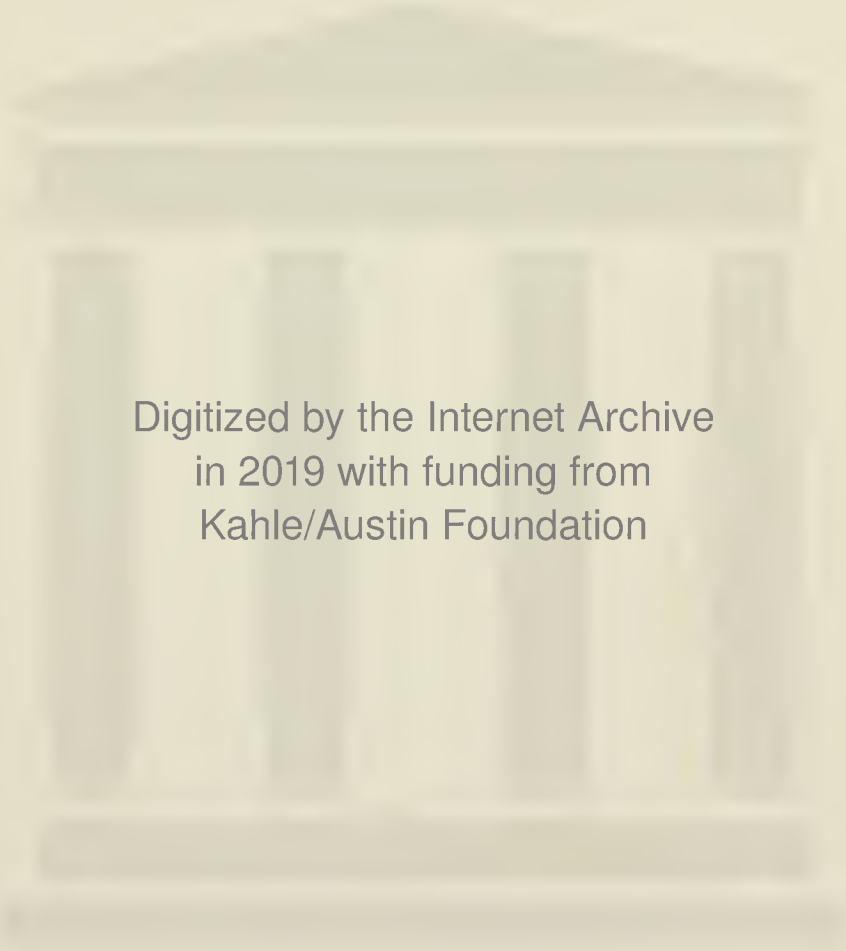

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CAPE BRETON TALES

THE INNER HARBOR

CAPE BRETON TALES

BY

HARRY JAMES SMITH

AUTHOR OF

Amédée's Son, Enchanted Ground, Mrs. Bumpstead Leigh,
Tailor Made Man, etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
OLIVER M. WIARD

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By OLIVER M. WIARD

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"At a Breton Calvaire" was first published in The Williams Literary Monthly during undergraduate days, and was rewritten several times during the next few years. The final form is the one used here, except for the last stanza, which is a combination of the two versions now extant.

The illustrations are from sketches made during Oliver Wiard's visits in Arichat. It is an especial pleasure to include them, not only because of their fidelity and beauty, but also because of my brother's enthusiastic interest and delight in them.

EDITH SMITH.

ON THE FRENCH SHORE OF CAPE BRETON

ON THE FRENCH SHORE OF CAPE BRETON

UMMER comes late along the Cape Breton shore; and even while it stays there is something a little diffident and ticklish about it, as if each clear warm day might perhaps be the last. Though by early June the fields are in their first emerald, there are no flowers yet. The little convent girls who carry the banners at the head of the Corpus Christi procession at Arichat wear wreaths of artificial lilies of the valley and marguerites over their white veils, and often enough their teeth chatter with cold before the completion of the long march — out from the church portals westward by the populous street, then up through the steep open fields to the old Calvary on top of the hill, then back to the church along the grass-grown upper road, far above the roofs, in full view of the wide bay.

Despite some discomforts, the procession is a very great event; every house along the route is decked out with bunting or flags or a bright home-made carpet, hung from a window. Pots of tall geraniums in scarlet bloom have been set out on the steps; and numbers of little evergreen trees, or birches newly in leaf, have been brought in from the country and bound to the fences. Along the roadside are gathered all the Acadians from the neighboring parishes, devoutly gay,

enchanted with the pious spectacle. The choir, following after the richly canopied Sacrament and swinging censers, are chanting psalms of benediction and thanksgiving; banners and flags and veils flutter in the wind; the harbor, ice-bound so many months, is flecked with dancing white-caps and purple shadows: surely summer cannot be far off.

"When once the ice has done passing *down there*," they say — "which may happen any time now — you will see! Perhaps all in a day the change will come. The fog that creeps in so cold at night — it will all be sucked up; the sky will be clear as glass down to the very edge of the water. Ah, the fine season it will be!"

That is the way summer arrives on the Acadian shore: everything bursting pell-mell into bloom; daisies and buttercups and August flowers rioting in the fields, lilacs and roses shedding their fragrance in sheltered gardens; and over all the world a drench of unspeakable sunlight.

You could never forget your first sight of Arichat if you entered its narrow harbor at this divine moment. Steep, low hills, destitute of trees, set a singularly definite sky-line just behind; and the town runs — dawdles, rather — in a thin, wavering band for some miles sheer on the edge of the water. Eight or ten wharves, some of them fallen into dilapidation, jut out at intervals from clumps of weatherbeaten storehouses; and a few small vessels, it may be, are lying up alongside or anchored idly off shore. Only the occasional sound of

a creaking block or of a wagon rattling by on the hard roadway breaks the silence.

Along the street the houses elbow one another in neighborly groups, or straggle out in single file, separated by bits of declivitous white-fenced yard; and to the westward, a little distance up the hill, sits the square church, far outvying every other edifice in size and dignity, glistening white, with a tall bronze Virgin on the peak of the roof — Our Lady of the Assumption, the special patron of the Acadians.

But what impresses you above all is the incredible vividness of color in this landscape: the dazzling gold-green of the fields, heightened here and there by luminous patches of foam-white where the daisies are in full carnival, or subdued to duller tones where, on uncultivated ground, moss-hummocks and patches of rock break through the investiture of grass. The sky has so much room here too: the whole world seems to be adrift in azure; the thin strip of land hangs poised between, claimed equally by firmament and the waters under it.

In the old days, they tell us, Arichat was a very different place from now. Famous among the seaports of the Dominion, it saw a continual coming and going of brigs and ships and barquentines in the South American fish trade.

"But if you had known it then!" they say. "The wharves were as thick all the length of the harbor as the teeth of a comb; and in winter, when the vessels were laid up — eh, mon Dieu! you would have called it

a forest, for all the masts and spars you saw there. No indeed, it was not dreamed of in those days that Arichat would ever come to this!"

So passes the world's glory! An air of tender, almost jealous reminiscence hangs about the town; and in its gentle decline into obscurity it has kept a sort of dignity, a self-possession, a certain look of wisdom and experience, which in a sense make it proof against all arrows of outrageous Fortune.

Back from the other shore of the harbor, jutting out for some miles into Chedabucto Bay, lies the Cape. You get a view of it if you climb to the crest of the hill — a broad reach of barrens, fretted all day by the sea. Out there it is what the Acadians call a bad country. About the sluice-like coves that have been eaten into its rocky shore are scrambling groups of fishermen's houses; but aside from these and the light-house on the spit of rocks to southward, the region is uninhabited — a waste of rock and swamp-alder and scrub-balsam, across which a single thread of a road takes its circuitous way, dipping over steep low hills, turning out for gnarls of rock and patches of gleaming marsh, losing itself amid dense thickets of alder, then emerging upon some bare hilltop, where the whole measureless sweep of sea and sky fills the vision.

When the dusk begins to fall of an autumn afternoon — between dog and wolf, as the saying goes — you could almost believe in the strange noises — the rumblings, clankings, shrill voices — that are to be heard above the dull roar of the sea by belated passers

on the barrens. Some people have seen death-fires too, and a headless creature, much like a horse, galloping through the darkness; and over there at Fougère's Cove, the most remote settlement of the Cape, there were knockings at doors through all one winter from hands not human. The Fougères — they were mostly of one tribe there — were driven to desperation; they consulted a priest; they protected themselves with blessed images, with prayers and holy water; and no harm came to them, though poor Marcelle, who was a *jeune fille* of marriageable age, was prostrated for a year with the fright of it.

This barren territory, where nothing grows above the height of a man's shoulder, still goes by the name of "the woods" — *les bois* — among the Acadians. "Once the forest was magnificent here," they tell you — "trees as tall as the church tower; but the great fire swept it all away; and never has there been a good growth since. For one thing, you see, we must get our firewood from it somehow."

This fact accounts for a curious look in the ubiquitous stubby evergreens: their lower branches spread flat and wide close on the ground, — that is where the snow in winter protects them, — and above reaches a thin, spire-like stem, trimmed close, except for new growth at the top, of all its branches. It gives suggestion of a harsh, misshapen, all but defeated existence; the adverse forces are so tyrannical out here on the Cape, the material of life so sparse.

I remember once meeting a little funeral train

crossing the barrens. They were bearing the body of a young girl, Anna Béjean, to its last rest, five miles away by the road, in the yard of the parish church amongst the wooden crosses. The long box of pine lay on the bottom of a country wagon, and a wreath of artificial flowers and another of home-dyed immortelles were fastened to the cover. A young fisherman, sunburned and muscular, was leading the horse along the rough road, and behind followed three or four carts, carrying persons in black, all of middle age or beyond, and silent.

Yet in the full tide of summer the barrens have a beauty in which this characteristic melancholy is only a persistent undertone. Then the marshes flush rose-pink with lovely multitudes of calopogons that cluster like poising butterflies amongst the dark grasses; here too the canary-yellow bladderwort flecks the black pools, and the red, leathery pitcher-plant springs in sturdy clumps from the moss-hummocks. And the wealth of color over all the country! — gray rock touched into life with sky-reflections; rusty green of alder thickets, glistening silver-green of balsam and juniper; and to the sky-line, wherever it can keep its hold, the thin, variegated carpet of close-cropped grass, where creeping berries of many kinds grow in profusion. Flocks of sheep scamper untended over the barrens all day, and groups of horses, turned out to shift for themselves while the fishing season keeps their owners occupied, look for a moment, nose in the air, at the passer, kick up their heels, and race off.

As you turn back again toward Arichat you catch a glimpse of its glistening white church, miles distant in reality, but looking curiously near, across a landscape where none of the familiar standards of measure exist. You lose it on the next decline; then it flashes in sight again, and the blue, sun-burnished expanse of water between. It occurs to you that the whole life of of the country finds its focus there: christenings and first communions, marriages and burials — how wonderfully the church holds them all in her keeping; how she sends out her comfort and her exhortation, her reproach and her eternal hope across even this bad country, where the circumstances of human life are so ungracious.

But it is on a Sunday morning, when, in response to the quavering summons of the chapel bell, the whole countryside gives up its population, that you get the clearest notion of what religion means in the life of the Acadians. From the doorway of our house, which was close to the road at the upper end of the harbor, we could see the whole church-going procession from the outlying districts. The passing would be almost unbroken from eight o'clock on for more than an hour and a half: a varied, vivacious, friendly human stream. They came in hundreds from the scattered villages and hamlets of the parish — from Petit de Grat and Little Anse and Pig Cove and Gros Nez and Point Rouge and Cap au Guet, eight or nine miles often enough.

First, those who went afoot and must allow plenty of time on account of age: bent old fishermen, whose

yellowed and shiny coats had been made for more robust shoulders; old women, invariably in short black capes, and black bonnets tied tight under the chin, and in their hands a rosary and perhaps a thumb-worn missal. Then troops of children, much *endimanché,* — one would like to say " Sundayfied," — trotting along noisily, stopping to examine every object of interest by the way, extracting all the excitement possible out of the weekly pilgrimage.

A little later the procession became more general: young and old and middle-aged together. In Sunday boots that creaked loudly passed numbers of men and boys, sometimes five or six abreast, reaching from side to side of the street, sometimes singly attendant upon a conscious young person of the other sex. The wagons are beginning to appear now, scattering the pedestrians right and left as they rattle by, bearing whole families packed in little space; and away across the harbor, you see a small fleet of brown sails putting off from the Cape for the nearer shore.

Outside the church, in the open space before the steps, is gathered a constantly growing multitude, a dense, restless swarm of humanity, full of gossip and prognostic, until suddenly the bell stops its clangor overhead; then there is a surging up the steps and through the wide doors of the sanctuary; and outside all is quiet once more.

The Acadians do not appear greatly to relish the more solemn things of religion. They like better a religion demurely gay, pervaded by light and color.

" Elle est très chic, notre petite église, n'est-ce pas? " was a comment made by a pious soul of my acquaintance, eager to uphold the honor of her parish.

Proper, mild-featured saints and smiling Virgins in painted robes and gilt haloes abound in the Acadian churches; on the altars are lavish decorations of artificial flowers — silver lilies, paper roses, red and purple immortelles; and the ceilings and pillars and wall-spaces are often done in blue and pink, with gold stars; such a style, one imagines, as might appeal to our modern St. Valentine. The piety that expresses itself in this inoffensive gayety of embellishment is more akin to that which moves universal humanity to don its finery o' Sundays, — to the greater glory of God, — than to the sombre, death-remembering zeal of some other communities. A kind religion this, one not without its coquetries, gracious, tactful, irresistible, interweaving itself throughout the very texture of the common life.

Last summer, out at Petit de Grat, three miles from Arichat, where the people have just built a little church of their own, they held a " Grand Picnic and Ball " for the raising of funds with which to erect a glebe house. The priest authorized the affair, but stipulated that sunset should end each day's festivities, so that all decencies might be respected. This parish picnic started on a Monday and continued daily for the rest of the week — that is to say, until all that there was to sell was sold, and until all the youth of the vicinity had danced their legs to exhaustion.

An unoccupied shop was given over to the sale of cakes, tartines, doughnuts, imported fruits, syrup drinks (unauthorized beverages being obtainable elsewhere), to the vending of chances on wheels of fortune, target-shooting, dice-throwing, hooked rugs, shawls, couvertures, knitted hoods, and the like; and above all the hubbub and excitement twanged the ceaseless, inevitable voice of a graphophone, reviving long-forgotten rag-time.

Outside, most conspicuous on the treeless slope of hill, was a "pavilion" of boards, bunting-decked, on which, from morn till eve, rained the incessant clump-clump of happy feet. For music there was a succession of performers and of instruments: a mouth-organ, a fiddle, a concertina, each lending its particular quality of gayety to the dance; the mouth-organ, shrill, extravagant, whimsical, failing in richness; the concertina, rich, noisy, impetuous, failing in fine shades; the fiddle, wheedling, provocative, but a little thin. And besides — the fiddle is not what it used to be in the hands of old Fortune.

Fortune died a year ago, and he was never appreciated till death snatched him from us: the skinniest, most ramshackle of mankind, tall, loose-jointed, shuffling in gait; at all other times than those that called his art into play, a shiftless, hang-dog sort of personage, who would always be begging a coat of you, or asking the gift of ten cents to buy him some tobacco. But at a dance he was a despot unchallenged. Only to hear him jig off the Irish Washerwoman was to

acknowledge his preëminence. His bleary eyes and tobacco-stained lips took on a radiance, his body rocked to and fro, vibrated to the devil-may-care rhythm of the thing, while his left foot emphatically rapped out the measure.

Until another genius shall be raised up amongst us, Fortune's name will be held in cherished memory. For that matter, it is not likely to die out, since, on the day of his death, the old reprobate was married to the mother of his seven children — baptized, married, administered, and shuffled off in a day.

It had never occurred to any of us, somehow, that Fortune might be as transitory and impermanent as his patron goddess herself. We had always accepted him as a sort of ageless thing, a living symbol, a peripatetic mortal, coming out of Petit de Grat, and going about, tobacco in cheek, fiddle under arm, as irresponsible as mirth itself among the sons of men. God rest him! Another landmark gone.

And old Maximen Forêt, too, from whom one used to take weather-wisdom every day — his bench out there in the sun is empty. Maximen's shop was just across the street from our house — a long, darkish, tunnel-like place under a steep roof. Tinware of all descriptions hung in dully shining array from the ceiling; barrels and a rusty stove and two broad low counters occupied most of the floor space, and the atmosphere was charged with a curious sharp odor in which you could distinguish oil and tobacco and molasses. The floor was all dented full of little holes,

like a honeycomb, where Maximen had walked over it with his iron-pointed crutch; for he was something of a cripple. But you rarely had any occasion to enter the smelly little shop, for no one ever bought much of anything there nowadays.

Instead, you sat down on the sunny bench beside the old man — Acadian of the Acadians — and listened to his tireless, genial babble — now French, now English, as the humor struck him.

"It go mak' a leetle weat'er, m'sieu," he would say. "I t'ink you better not go fur in the p'tit caneau t'is day. Dere is squall — là-bas — see, dark — may be t'unner. Dat is not so unlike, dis mont'. Oh, w'at a hell time for de hays!"

For everybody who passed he had a greeting, even for those who had hastened his business troubles through never paying their accounts. To the last he never lost his faith in their good intentions.

"Dose poor devil fishermen," he would say, "however dey mak' leeve, God know. You t'ink I mak' 'em go wid notting? It ain't lak dat wit' me here yet, m'sieu. Dey pay some day, when le bon Dieu, he send dem some feesh; dat's sure sure."

If it happened that anybody stopped on business, old Maximen would hobble to the door and tug violently at a bell-rope.

"Cr-r-r-line! Cr-r-r-line!" he would call.

"Tout d' suite!" answered a shrill voice from some remoter portion of the edifice; and a moment later an old woman with straggling white hair, toothless gums,

and penetrating, humorous eyes, deepset under a forehead of infinite wrinkles, would come shuffling up the pebble walk from the basement.

"Me voila!" she would ejaculate, panting. "Me ol' man, he always know how to git me in a leetle minute, hé?"

On Sundays Caroline and Maximen would drive to chapel in a queer, heavy, antiquated road-cart that had been built especially for his use, hung almost as low between the axles as a chariot.

"We go mak' our respec' to the bon Dieu," he would laugh, as he took the reins in hand and waited for Célestine, the chunky little mare, to start — which she did when the mood took her.

The small shop is closed and beginning to fall to pieces. Maximen has been making his respects amid other surroundings for some four or five years, and Caroline, at the end of a twelvemonth of lonely waiting, followed after.

"It seem lak I need t'e ol' man to look out for," she used to say. "All t'e day I listen to hear t'at bell again. 'Tout d' suite! I used to call, no matter what I do — maybe over the stove or pounding my bread; and den, 'Me voila, mon homme!' I would be at t'e shop, ready to help."

I suppose that wherever a man looks in the world, if he but have the eyes to see, he finds as much of gayety and pathos, of failure and courage, as in any particular section of it; yet so much at least is true: that in a little community like this, so removed from the

larger, more spectacular conflicts of life, so face to face, all the year, with the inveterate and domineering forces of nature, one seems to discover a more poignant relief in all the homely, familiar, universal episodes of the human comedy.

ARICHAT

LA ROSE WITNESSETH

OF THE BUCHERONS
OF LA BELLE MÉLANIE
OF SIMÉON'S SON

LA ROSE WITNESSETH

Of How the Bucherons Were Punished for Their Hard Hearts

IT was a boy of ten who listened to La Rose, and while he listened, the sun stood still in the sky, there was an enchantment on all the world. Whatever La Rose said you had to believe, somehow. Oh, I assure you, no one could be more exacting than she in the matter of proofs. For persons who would give an ear to any absurd story tattled abroad she had nothing but contempt.

"Before you believe a thing," said La Rose, sagely, "you must know whether it is true or not. That is the most important part of a story."

She would give a decisive nod to her small head and shut her lips together almost defiantly. Yet always, somewhere in the corner of her alert gray eye, there seemed to be lurking the ghost of a twinkle. La Rose had no age. She was both very young and very old. For all she had never traveled more than ten miles from the little Cape Breton town of Port l'Évêque, you had the feeling that she had seen a good deal of the world, and it is certain that her life had not been easy; yet she would laugh as quickly and abundantly as a young girl just home from the convent.

These two were the best of comrades. La Rose had been the boy's nurse when he was little, and as he had

no mother she had kept a feeling of special affection and responsibility for him. Thus it happened that whenever she was making some little expedition out across the harbor — say for blueberries on the barrens, or white moorberries, or ginseng — she would get permission from the captain for Michel to go with her; and this was the happiest privilege in the boy's life. Most of all because of the stories La Rose would tell him.

La Rose had a story to tell about every spot they visited, about every person they passed. She had been brought up, herself, out here on the Cape; and not an inch of its territory but was familiar to her.

" Now that is where those Bucherons lived," she observed one day, as they were walking homeward from Pig Cove by the Calvaire road. " They are all gone now, and the house is almost fallen to pieces; but once things were lively enough there — mon Dieu, oui! — quite lively enough for comfort."

She gave a sagacious nod to her head, with the look of one who could say more, and would, if you urged her a little.

" Was it at the Bucherons' that all the chairs stood on one leg? " asked Michel, thrilling mysteriously.

" Oui, c'est ça," answered La Rose, in a voice of the most sepulchral, " right there in that house, the chairs stood on one leg and went rap — rap — against the floor. And more than once a table with dishes and other things on it fell over, and there were strange sounds in the cupboard. Oh, it is certain those Buch-

erons were tormented; but for that matter they had brought it on themselves because of their greediness and their hard hearts. It came for a punishment; and when they repented themselves, it went away."

"I haven't ever heard all the story about the Bucherons," said Michel — "or at least, not since I was big. I am almost sure I would like it."

"Well, I daresay," agreed La Rose. "It is an interesting story in some ways; and the best of it is, it is not one of those stories that are only to make you laugh, and then you go right away and forget them. And another thing: this story about the Bucherons really happened. It was when my poor stepmother was a girl. She lived at Pig Cove then, and that is only two miles from Gros Nez. And one of those Bucherons was once wanting to marry her; but do you think she would have anything to do with a man like that?

"'No,' she said. 'I will have nothing to do with you. I would sooner not ever be married, me, than to have you for my man.'

"And the reason she spoke that way was because of the cruelty they had shown toward that poor widow of a Noémi, which everybody on the Cape knew about, and it was a great scandal. And if you want me to tell you about it, that is what I am going to do now."

La Rose seated herself on a flat rock by the road, and Michel found another for himself close by. Below them lay a deep rocky cove, with shores as steep as a sluice, and close above its inner margin stood the shell of a small house. The chimney had fallen in, the

windows were all gone — only vacant holes now, through which you saw the daylight from the other side, and the roof had begun to sag.

" Yes," said La Rose, " it will soon be gone to pieces entirely, and then there will be nothing to remind anyone of those Bucherons and what torments they had. You see there were four of them, an old woman and two sons, and one of the sons was married, but there were not any children; and all those four must have had stones instead of hearts. They were only thinking how they could get the better of other people, and so become rich.

"And before that there had been three sons at home; but one of them — Benoît his name was — had married a certain Noémi Boudrot; and she was as sweet and beautiful as a lily, and he too was different from the others; and so they had not lived here, but had got a little house at Pig Cove, where they were very happy; and the good God sent them two children, of a beauty and gentleness indescribable; and they called them Évangéline and little Benoît, but you do not need to remember that, because it is not a part of the story.

" So things went on that way for quite a while; and all the time those four Bucherons were growing more and more hard-hearted, like four serpents in a pile together.

" Well, one day in October that Benoît Bucheron who lived in Pig Cove was going alone in a small cart to Port l'Évêque to buy some provisions for winter — flour, I suppose, and meal, and perhaps some clothes

and some tobacco; and instead of going direct by the Gros Nez road, he came around this way by the Calvaire so as to stop in and speak to his relatives; and to see them welcoming him, you would never have suspected their stone hearts. But Benoît was solemn for all that, as if troubled by some idea. Then that sly old mother, she said:

" ' Dear Benoît,' she said, ' what troubles you? Can you not put trust in your own mother, who loves you better than her eyes and nose? '— and she smiled at him just like a fat wicked old spider that is waiting for a fly to come and get tangled up in her net.

" But Benoît only remembered then that she was his mother; so he said:

" 'I have a fear, me, that I shall not be long for this world, my mother. Last week I saw a little blue fire on the barrens one night, and again one night I heard hoofs going *claquin-claquant* down there on the beach, much like the horse without head. And that is why I am getting my provisions so early, and making everything ready for the winter. See,' he said, ' here is the thirteen dollars I have saved this year. I am going to buy things with it in Port l'Évêque.'

" Now you may depend that when he showed them all that money, their eyes stuck out like the eyes of crabs; but of course they did not say anything only some words of the most comforting. And finally he said, getting ready to go:

" ' If anything should happen,' he said, ' will you promise me to be good to that poor Noémi and those

two poor little innocent lambs?' — and those serpents said, certainly, they would do all that was possible; and with that Benoît gets into his cart, and starts down the hill; and suddenly the horse takes a fright of something and runs away, and the cart tips over, and Benoît is thrown out; and when his brothers get to him he is quite quite dead — and that shows what it means to see one of those little blue fires at night in the woods.

"Well, you can believe that Noémi was not very happy when they brought back that poor Benoît to Pig Cove. Her eyes were like two brooks, and for a long time she could not say anything, and then finally, summoning a little voice of courage:

"'I am glad of one thing,' she said, 'which is that he had saved all that money, for without it I would never know how to live through the winter.'

"And one of those brothers said, with an innocent voice of a dove, 'what money then?' — and she said, 'He had it with him.' And so they look for it; but no, there is not any.

"'You must have deceived yourself,' said that brother. 'I am sure he would have spoken of it if he had had any money with him; but he said never a word of such a thing.'

"Now was not that a wicked lie for him to tell? It is hard to understand how abominable can be some of those men! But you may be sure they will be punished for it in the end; and that is what happened to those four serpents, the Bucherons.

"For listen. The old mother had taken the money

and had put it inside a sort of covered bowl, like a sugar bowl, but there was no sugar in it; and then she had set this bowl away on a shelf in the cupboard where they kept the dishes and such things; and the Bucherons thought it would be safe until the time when they had something to spend it for in Port l'Évêque; and they were telling themselves how no one would ever know what they had done; and they were glad that the promise they had made to Benoît had not been heard by anyone but themselves. And so that poor Noémi was left all alone without man or money; but sometimes the neighbors would give her a little food; but for all that those two lambs were often hungry, and their mother too, when it came bedtime.

" But do you think the Bucherons cared — those four hearts of stone? They would not even give her so much as a crust of dry, mouldy bread; and Noémi was too proud to go and beg; and beside something seemed to tell her that there had been a wickedness somewhere, and that the Bucherons perhaps knew more than they had told her about that money. So she waited to see if anything would happen.

" Now one night in December, when all those four were in the house alone, the beginning of their punishment arrived, and surely nothing more strange was ever heard of in this world.

" 'Ah, mon Dieu!' cries out the married woman all of a sudden — ' mon Dieu, what is that!'

" They all looked where she was looking, and what do you think they saw? There was a chair standing

with three legs in the air, and only the little point of one on the floor.

"The old woman pushed a scream and jumped to her feet and went over to it, and with much force set it back on the floor, the way a chair is meant to stand; but immediately when she let go of it, there it was again, as before, all on one leg.

"And then, there cries out the younger woman again, with a voice shrill as a frightened horse that throws up its head and then runs away — 'Oh, mère Bucheron, mère Bucheron,' cries she, 'the chair you were just sitting in is three legs in air too!'

"And so it was! With that all the family got up in terror; but no sooner had they done that than at once all the chairs behaved just like the first, which made five chairs. These chairs did not seem to move at all, but stood there on one leg just as if they were always like that. Those Bucherons were almost dead with fright, and all four of them fled out of the house as fast as ever their legs could carry them — you would have said sheep chased by a mad dog — and never stopped for breath till they reached Gros Nez.

"And pell-mell into old Pierre Leblanc's house all together, and shaking like ague. Hardly able to talk, they tell what has happened; and he will not believe them but says, well, he will go back with them and see. So he does, and they re-enter the house together, and look! the chairs are all just as usual.

"'You have been making some crazy dreams,' says Pierre, rather angry, 'or else,' he says, 'you have

something bad in your hearts.' And with that he goes home again; and there is nothing more to be told about that night, though I daresay none of those wicked persons slept very well.

" But that was only the beginning of what happened to them during that winter. Sometimes it would be these knockings about the roof, as of someone with a great hammer; and again it was as if they had seen a face at the window — just an instant, all white, in the dark — and then it would be gone. And often, often, the chairs would be standing as before on one leg. The table likewise, which once let fall a great crowd of dishes, and not a few were broken. But worst of all were these strange sounds that made themselves heard in the cupboard, like the hand of a corpse going rap — rap, rap — rap — rap, rap, — against the lid of its coffin. You may well believe it was a dreadful fright for those four infamous ones; but still they would do nothing, because of their desire to keep all that money and buy things with it.

" Everybody on the Cape soon knew about what was happening at the Bucherons', but some pretended it was to laugh at, saying that such things did not happen nowadays; and others said the Bucherons must have gone crazy, and had better be left alone — and their arms and legs would sometimes keep jerking a little when they talked to anyone, as my stepmother told me a thousand times; and they had a way of looking behind them — so! — as if they were afraid of being pursued. So however that might be, nobody would go and see them.

" Well, things went on like that for quite a while, and finally, one day in February, through all the snow that it made on the ground then, that poor Noémi marched on her feet from Pig Cove to her mother-in-law's, having left her two infants at a neighbor's; for she had resolved herself to ask for some help, seeing that she had had nothing but a little bite since three days. And when they saw her coming they were taken with a fright, and at first they were not going to let her in; but that old snake of a mother, she said:

" ' If we refuse to let her in, my children, she will go and suspect something.'

" So they let her in, and when she was in, they let her make all her story, or as much as she had breath for, and then:

" ' I am sorry,' said this old snake of a mother, ' that we cannot possibly do anything for you. Alas, my dear little daughter, it is barely even if we can manage to hold soul and body together ourselves, with the terrible winter it makes these days.'

"And just as she said that, what do you think happened? A chair got on one leg and went rap — rap, rap — against the floor.

" That Noémi would often be telling about it afterwards to my stepmother, and she said never of her life had she seen anything so terrifying. But she did not scream or do anything like that, because something, she said, inside her seemed to bid her keep quiet just then. And she used to tell how that old Bucheron woman's face turned exactly the color of an oyster on

a white plate, and a trembling took her, and finally she said, scarcely able to make the sound of the words:

" ' Though perhaps — I might find — a crust of bread somewhere that — that we could spare.'

"That was how she spoke, and at the same instant, *rap* went the chair, still on its one leg; and there was a sound of a hammering on the roof.

" ' Or perhaps — a little loaf of bread and some potatoes,' said that old Bucheron, while the other Bucherons sat there without one word, in their chairs, as if paralyzed, except that their hands kept up a little shaking motion all the time, like this scour-grass you get in the marsh, which trembles always even if there is not any wind. ' Or perhaps a loaf of bread and some potatoes' — that is what she was saying, when listen, there is a knock as of the hand of corpse just inside the cupboard; and suddenly the two doors fly open — you would have said *pushed* from the inside!

" Noémi crosses herself, but does not say anything, for she knows it is a time to keep still.

" 'And perhaps,' says the old woman then, in a voice of the most piteous, as if someone were giving her a pinch, ' and perhaps, if only I had it, a dollar or two to help buy some medicine and a pair of shoes for that Évangéline. . . But no, I do not think we have so much as that anywhere in the house.'

" Now was not that like the old serpent, to be telling a lie even at the last; and surely if God had struck her dead by a ball of lightning at that moment it would have been none too good for her. But no, he was

going to give her a chance to repent and not to have to go to Hell for a punishment. So what do you think He made happen then?

" Hardly had those abominable words jumped out of her when with a great crash, down off the top shelf comes that sugar bowl (if it was a sugar bowl), and as it hits the floor, it breaks into a thousand pieces; and there, in a little pile, are those thirteen dollars, just as on the day when that poor Benoît had been carrying them with him to Port l'Évêque.

" Now just as if they are not doing it at all of their own wish, but something makes them act that way, all of a sudden those four Bucherons are kneeling on the floor, saying their prayers in a strange voice like the prayers you might hear in a tomb; and with that, the chair goes back quietly to its four legs, and the noise ceases on the roof, and those two cupboard doors draw shut without human hands. As for Noémi, she grabs up the money, and out she goes, swift as a bird that is carrying a worm to its children, leaving her parents by marriage still there on their knees, like so many images; but as she opens the door she says:

" ' May the good God have pity on all the four of you! '— which was a Christian thing to say, seeing how much she had suffered at their hands.

" Well, there is not much more to tell. Noémi got through the rest of that winter without any more trouble; and the next year she married a fisherman from Little Anse, and went away from the Cape. As for the Bucherons, they were not like the same people

any more. You would not have known them — so pious they were and charitable, though always, perhaps, a little strange in their ways. But when the old woman died, two years later, or three, all the people of Pig Cove and Gros Nez followed the corpse in to Port l'Évêque; and her grave is there in the cemetery.

"The rest of the family are gone now too, as you see; and soon, I suppose, there will not be many left, even out here on the Cape, who know all about what happened to the Bucherons, because of their hard hearts; which is a pity, seeing that the story has such a good lesson to it. . . . "

LA ROSE WITNESSETH

**Of the Headless Horse and of La Belle Mélanie's Narrow Escape from the Feu Follet*

ONE of the privileges Michel esteemed most highly was that of accompanying La Rose occasionally when she went blueberrying over on the barrens — *dans les bois,* as the phrase still goes in Port l'Évêque, though it is all of sixty years since there were any woods there. The best barrens for blueberrying lay across the harbor. They reached back to the bay four or five miles to southward. Along the edges of several rocky coves, narrow and steep as a sluice, clung a few weather-beaten fishermen's houses; but there was no other sign of human habitation.

It is what they call a bad country over there. Alder and scrub balsam grow sparsely over the low rocky hills, where little flocks of sheep nibble all day at the thin herbage; and from the marshes that lie, green and mossy, at the foot of every slope, a solitary loon may occasionally be seen rising into the air with a great spread of slow wings. A single thread of a road makes its way somehow across the region, twisting in and out among the small hills, now climbing suddenly to a bare elevation, from which the whole sweep of the

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sea bursts upon the view, now shelving off along the side of a knoll of rocks, quickly dipping into some close hollow, where the world seems to reach no farther than to the strange sky-line, wheeling sharply against infinite space.

Two miles back from the inner shore, the road forks at the base of a little hill more conspicuously bare than the rest, and close to the naked summit of it, overlooking all the Cape, stands a Calvary. Nobody knows how long it has stood there, or why it was first erected; though tradition has it that long, long ago, a certain man by the name of Toussaint was there set upon by wild beasts and torn to pieces. However that may be, the tall wooden cross, painted black, and bearing on its center, beneath a rude penthouse, a small iron crucifix, has been there longer than any present memory records — an encouragement, as they say, for those who have to cross the bad country after dark.

"That makes courage for you," they say. "It is good to know it is there on the windy nights."

By daylight, however, and especially in the sunshine, the barrens are quite without other terrors than those of loneliness; and upon Michel this remoteness and silence always exercised a kind of spell. He was glad that La Rose was with him, partly because he would have been a little afraid to be there quite by himself, but chiefly because of the imaginative sympathy that at this time existed so strongly between them. La Rose could tell him all about the strange things that had been seen here of winter nights; she herself once, tend-

ing a poor old sick woman at Gros Nez, out at the end of the Cape, had heard the hoofs of the white horse that gallops across the barrens *claquin-claquant* in the darkness.

"It was just there outside the house, pawing the ground. Almost paralyzed for terror, I ran to the window and looked out. It was as tall as the church door, — that animal, — all white, and there was no head to it.

"'Oh, mère Babinot,' I whispered, scarcely able to make the sound of the words. 'It is as tall as the church door and all white.'

"She sits up in bed and stares at me like a corpse. 'La Rose,' she says, — just like that, shrill as a whistle of wind, — 'La Rose, do you see a head to it?'

"'No, not any!'

"'Oh, mon Dieu, mon Dieu! Then it's sure! It is the very one, the horse without head!'

"And the next day she took only a little spoonful of tea, and in two weeks she was dead, poor mère Babinot; and that's as true as that I made my communion last Easter. Oh, it's often seen hereabouts, that horse. It's a sign that something will happen, and never has it failed yet."

They made their way, La Rose and Michel, slowly over the low hills, picking the blueberries that grew thickly in clumps of green close to the ground. La Rose always wore a faded yellow-black dress, the skirt caught up, to save it, over a red petticoat; and on her small brown head she carried the old Acadian *mou-*

choir, black, brought up to a peak in front, and knotted at the side.

She picked rapidly, with her alert, spry movements, her head always cocked a little to one side, almost humorously, as she peered about among the bushes for the best spots. And wherever he was, Michel heard her chattering softly to herself, in an inconsequential undertone, now humming a scrap of some pious song, now commenting on the quality of the berry crop — never had she seen so few and so small as these last years. Surely there must be something to account for it. Perhaps the birds had learned the habitude of devouring them — now addressing some strayed sheep that had ventured with timid bleats within range: "Te voilà, petit méchant! Little rogue! What are you looking about for? Did the others go off and leave you? Eh bien, that's how it happens, mon petit. They'll leave you. The world's like that. Eh, là, là!"

He liked to go to the other side of the hill, out of sight of her, where he could imagine that he was lost *dans les bois.* Then he would listen for her continual soft garrulity; and if he could not hear it he would wait quietly for a minute in the silence, feeling a strange exhilaration, which was almost pain, in the presence of the great sombre spaces, the immense emptiness of the overhanging sky, until he could endure it no longer.

"La Rose!" he would call. "Êtes-vous toujours là?"

" Mais oui, mon enfant. What do you want? "

" Nothing. It is only that I was thinking."

" The strange child that you are! " she would exclaim. " You are not like the others."

" La Rose," he would ask, " was it by here that La Belle Mélanie passed on the night she saw the death fire? "

" Yes, by this very spot. She was on her way to Pig Cove, over beyond the Calvary to the east. It is a desolate little rat-hole, Pig Cove, nowadays; but then it was different — as many as two dozen houses. My stepmother lived in one of them. Now there are scarcely six, and falling to pieces at that. La Belle Mélanie, she was a Boudrot, sister of the Pierre Boudrot whose son, Théobald, was brother-in-law of stepmother. That was many years ago. They are all dead now, or gone away from here — to Boston, I daresay."

" Will you tell me about that again, — the *feu follet* and Mélanie? "

It was the story Michel liked the best, most of all when he could sit beside La Rose, on a moss-hummock of some rough hill on the barrens. Perhaps there would be cloud shadows flitting like dream presences across the shining face of the moor. In the distance, over the backs of the hills that crouched so thickly about them, he saw the stretch of the ocean, a motionless floor of azure and purple, flecked, it might be, by a leaning sail far away; and now and then a gull or two would fly close over their heads, wheeling and

screaming for a few seconds, and then off again through the blue.

" S'il vous plaît, tante La Rose, see how many berries I have picked already! "

The little woman was not difficult of persuasion.

" It was in November," she began. " There had not been any snow yet; but the nights were cold and terribly dark under a sky of clouds. That autumn, as my stepmother often told me, many people had seen the horse without head as it galloped *claquin-claquant* across the barrens. At Gros Nez it was so bad that no one dared go out after dark, unless it was to run with all one's force to the neighbors — but not across the woods to save their souls. Especially because of the *feu follet*.

" Now you must know that the *feu follet* is of all objects whatever in the world the most mysterious. No one knows what it is or when it will come. You might walk across the barrens every night of your life and never encounter it; and again it might come upon you all unawares, not more than ten yards from your own threshold. It is more like a ball of fire than any other mortal thing, now large, now small, and always moving. Usually it is seen first hovering over one of the marshes, feeding on the poison vapors that rise from them at night: it floats there, all low, and like a little luminous cloud, so faint as scarcely to be seen by the eye. And sometimes people can travel straight by it, giving no attention, as if they did not know it was there, but keeping the regard altogether ahead of them

on the road, and the *feu follet* will let them pass without harm.

" But that does not happen often, for there are not many who can keep their wits clear enough to manage it. It brings a sort of dizziness, and one's legs grow weak. And then the *feu follet* draws itself together into a ball of fire and begins to pursue. It glides over the hills and flies across the marshes, sometimes in circles, sometimes bounding from rock to rock, but all the while stealing a little closer and a little closer, no matter how fast you run away. And finally — bff! like that — it's upon you — and that's the end. Death for a certainty. Not all the medicine in the four parishes can help you.

" Indeed, there are only two things in all the world that can save you from the *feu follet* once it gets after you. One is, if you are in a state of grace, all your sins confessed; which does not happen often to the inhabitants of Pig Cove, for even at this day Père Galland reproaches them for their neglect. And the other is, if you have a needle with you. So little a thing as a needle is enough, incredible as it may seem; for if you stick the needle upright — like that — in an old stump, the *feu follet* gets all tangled up in the eye of it. Try as it will, it cannot free itself; and meanwhile you run away, and are safe before it reappears. That is why all the inhabitants of the Cape used to carry a needle stuck somewhere in their garments, to use on such an occasion.

" Well, I must tell you about La Belle Mélanie.

That is the name she was known by in all parts, for she was beautiful as a lily flower, and no lily was ever more pure and sweet than she. Mélanie lived with her mother, who was aged almost to helplessness, and she cared for her with all the tenderness imaginable. You may believe that she was much sought after by the young fellows of the Cape — yes, and of Port l'Évêque as well, which used to hold its head in the air in those days; but her mother would hear nothing of her marrying.

" ' You are only seventeen,' she said, ' ma Mélanie. I will hear nothing of your marrying, no, not for five years at the least. By that time we shall see.'

"And Mélanie tried to be obedient to all her mother's commands, difficult as they often were for a young girl, who naturally desires a little to amuse herself sometimes. For even had her mother forbidden her to speak alone to the young men of the neighborhood, so fearful was she lest her daughter should think of marriage.

" Eh bien, and so that was how things went for quite a while, and every day Mélanie grew more beautiful. And one Saturday afternoon in November she had been in to Port l'Évêque to make her confession, for she was a pious girl. And when she went to meet her companions in order to return to Pig Cove with them, they said they were not going back that night, for there was to be a dance at the courthouse, and they were going to spend the night with some parents by marriage of theirs. Poor Mélanie! she would have been glad

to stay, but alas, her poor mother, aged and helpless, was expecting her, and she dared not disappoint the poor soul.

" So finally one of the young men said he would put her across the harbor, if she did not mind traversing the woods alone; and she said, no, why should she mind? It was still plain daylight. And so he put her across. And she said good-night to him and set off along the solitary road to the Cape, little imagining what an adventure was ahead of her.

" For scarcely had she gone so much as a mile when it had grown almost night, so suddenly at that time of the year does the daylight extinguish itself. The sky had grown dark, dark, and there was a look of storm in it. La Belle Mélanie began to grow uneasy of mind. And she thought then of the *feu follet,* and put her hand to her bodice to assure herself of her needle. What then! Alas! it was gone, by some accident, whether or not she had lost it on the road or in the church.

" With that Mélanie began to feel a terror creep over her; and this was not lessened, as you may well believe, when, a few minutes later, she perceived a floating thing like a luminous cloud in a marsh some long distance from the road. The night was now all black; scarcely could she perceive the road ahead, always winding there among the hills.

" She had the idea of running; but alas, her legs were like lead; she could not make them march in front of her. She saw herself already dead. The *feu*

follet was beginning to move, first very slowly and all uncertain, but then drawing itself together into a ball of fire, and leaping as if in play from one hummock of moss to another, just as a cat will leave a poor little mouse half dead on the floor while it amuses itself in another way.

" What the end would have been, who would have the courage to say, if just at this moment, all ready to fall to the ground for terror, poor Mélanie had not bethought herself of her rosary. It was in her pocket. She grasped it. She crossed herself. She saluted the crucifix. And then she commenced to say her prayers; and with that, wonderful to say, her strength came back to her, and she began to run. She had never ran like that before — swift as a horse, not feeling her legs under her, and praying with high voice all the time.

" But for all that, the death fire followed, always faster and faster, now creeping, now flying, now leaping from rock to rock, and always drawing nearer, and nearer, with a strange sound of a hissing not of this world. Mélanie began to feel her forces departing. She was almost exhausted. She would not be able to run much more.

"And suddenly, just ahead, on a bare height, there was the tall Calvaire, and a new hope came to her. If she could only reach it! She summoned all her strength and struggled up. She climbs the ascent. Alas, once more it seems she will fail! There is a fence, as you know, built of white pales, about the cross. She had not the power to climb it. She sinks to the ground.

And it was at that last minute, all flat on the ground in fear of death, that an idea came to her, as I will tell you.

"She raises herself to her feet by clinging to the white palings; she faces the *feu follet,* already not more than ten yards away; she holds out the rosary, making the holy sign in the air.

"'I did not make a full confession!' she cries. 'I omitted one thing. My mother had forbidden me to have anything to do with a young man; and one day when I was looking for Fanchette, our cow, who had wandered in the woods, I met André Babinot, and he kissed me.'

"That was what saved her. The *feu follet* rushed at her with a roar of defeat, and in the same instant it burst apart into a thousand flames and disappeared.

"As for Mélanie, she fell to the ground again, and lay there for a while, quite unconscious. At last the rain came on, and she revived, and set out for home, but not very vigorously. Ah, mon Dieu! if her poor mother was glad to see her alive again! She embraced her most tenderly, and with encouraging voice inquired what had happened, for Mélanie was still as white as milk, and there was a strange smell of fire in her garments, and still she held in her hands the little rosary; and so finally Mélanie told her everything, not even concealing the last confession about André, and with that her mother burst into tears, and said:

"'Mélanie,' she said, 'I have been wrong, me. A young girl will be a young girl despite all the contrary

intentions of her mother. To show how grateful to God I am that you are returned to me safe and sound, you shall marry André as soon as you like.'

" So they were married the next year. And there is a lesson to this story, too, which is that one should always tell the truth; because if La Belle Mélanie had told all the truth at the beginning she would not have had all that fright.

"And to show that the story is true, there were found the marks of flames on the white fence of the Calvaire the next day; and as often as they painted it over with whitewash, still the darkness of the scorched wood would show through, as I often saw for myself; but now there is a new fence there. . . . "

LA ROSE WITNESSETH

Of How Old Siméon's Son Came Home Again

N the old cemetery above the church some men were at work setting up a rather ornate monument at the head of two long-neglected and overgrown graves. La Rose had noticed what was going on, as she came out from early mass, and had informed herself about it; and since then, she said, all through the day, her thoughts had been traveling back to things that happened many years ago.

"Is it not strange," she observed musingly, sitting about dusk with Michel on the doorsill of the kitchen, while Céleste finished the putting-away of the supper dishes — "is it not strange how things go in this world? So often they turn out sorrowfully, and you cannot understand why that should be so. Think of that poor Léonie Gilet, who was taken so suddenly in the chest last winter and died all in a month, and she one of the purest and sweetest lilies that ever existed, and the next year she was to be married to a good man that loved her better than both his two eyes. Ah, mon Dieu, sometimes I think the sadness comes much more often than the joy down here."

She looked out broodingly, and with eyes that did not see anything, across the captain's garden and the hayfield below, dipping gently to the margin of the

harbor. Michel was silent. La Rose's fits of melancholy interested him even when he only dimly sensed the burden of them.

"And then," she resumed, after a moment, "sometimes the ending to things is happy. For a while all looks dark, dark, and there is grief, perhaps, and some tears; and then, just at the worst moment — tiens! — there is a change, and the happiness comes again, very likely even greater than it was at first. It is as if this good God up there, he could not bear any longer to see it so heartbreaking, and so he must take things into his own hands and set them right. And so, sometimes, when I find myself feeling sad about things, I like to remember what arrived to that poor Siméon Leblanc, whose son is just having them place a fine tombstone for him up there in the cimetière; for if ever happiness came to any man, it came to him, and that after a long time of griefs. Did you ever hear about this old Siméon Leblanc?"

"Never, tante La Rose," answered the boy, gravely. "But if it has a pleasant ending, I wish you would tell me about it, and I don't mind if it makes me cry a little in the middle."

By this, Céleste, the stout domestic, had finished her kitchen work, and throwing an apron over her stocky head and shoulders, she clumped out into the yard.

"I am running over to Alec Samson's," she explained, "to get a mackerel for breakfast, if he caught any to-day."

The gate clicked after her, and there was a silence.

At last La Rose began, a little absently and as if, for the moment at least, unaware of her auditor. . . .

" This Siméon Leblanc, he lived over there on the other side of the harbor, just beyond the place where the road turns off to go to the Cape. My poor stepmother when coming in to Port l'Évêque to sell some eggs or berries — three gallons, say, of blueberries, or perhaps some of those large strawberries from Pig Cove — she would often be running in there for a little rest and a talk with his wife, Célie — who always was glad to see any one, for that matter, the poor soul, for this Siméon was not too gentle, and often he made her unhappy with his harsh talk.

" 'Ah, mon amie,' she would say to my stepmother, at the same time wetting her eyes with tears — 'Ah, I have such a fear, me, that he will do himself a harm, one day, with the temper he has. He frightens me to death sometimes — especially about that Tommy.'

" Now you must understand that this Tommy was the son they had, and in some ways he resembled to his father, and in some ways to his mother. For it is certain he had a pride of the most incredible, which I daresay made him a little hard to manage; and yet in his heart there was a softness.

" ' That Tommy,' said his mother, ' he wants to be loved. That is the way to get him to do anything. There is no use in always punishing him and treating him hardly.'

" But for all that, old Siméon must have his will, and so he does not cease to be scolding the boy. He

commands him now to do this thing, now that — here, there. He forbids him to be from home at night. He tells him he is a disgrace of a son to be so little laborious. Oh, it was a horror the way that poor lamb of a Tommy was treated; and finally, one day, when he was seventeen or eighteen, there was a great quarrel, and that Siméon called him by some cruel name, and white as a corpse cries out Tommy:

" ' My father, that is not true. You shall not say it! ' — and the other, furious as an animal: ' I shall say what I choose! ' And he says the same thing again. And Tommy: 'After that, I will not endure to stay here another day. I am tired of being treated so. You will not have another chance.'

"And with that he places a kiss on the forehead of his poor mother, who was letting drop some tears, and walks out of the house without so much as turning his head again; and he marches over to Petit Ingrat, where there was an American fisherman which had put in for some bait, and he says to the captain: ' Will you give me a place? ' and the captain says, ' We are just needing another man. Yes, we will give you a place.' So this Tommy, he got aboard, and a little later they put out and went off to the Banks for the fish.

" Well, it was not very long before that Siméon got over his bad wicked rage; and then he was sorry enough for what he had done, especially because there was no longer any son in the house, and that poor Célie must always be grieving herself after him. And

you may believe that Siméon got little pity from the neighbors.

" ' It is good enough for him,' they would say — ' a man like that, who is not decent to his own son.'

" But they were sorry for Célie, most of all when she began to grow thinner and thinner and had a strange look in her eyes that was not entirely of this world. The old man said, ' She will be all right again when that schooner comes back,' and he was always going over to Petit Ingrat to find out if it had returned yet; but you see, of course there would not be any need of bait when the season was finished, and so the schooner did not put in at all; and the autumn came, and went by, and then followed the winter, and still no news, but only waiting and waiting, and a little before Easter that poor Célie went away among the angels. I think her heart was quite broken in two, and it did not seem to her that she needed to stay any longer in this hustling world. And so they buried her in the old cimetière — I saw her grave to-day, next to Siméon's, and this fine new monument is to be for the two of them; but for all these years there has been just a wooden cross there, like the other graves.

" But still no word came of Tommy, and the old Siméon was all alone in the house. Oh, I can remember him well, well, although I was only a young tiny girl then and had not had any sorrow myself. We would see him walking along the Petit Ingrat road, all bent over and trailing one leg a little.

" ' Hst! ' one of my companions would whisper,

'that is old Siméon, who drove his son from home; and his poor wife is dead with grief. He is going across there to see if a schooner will have come in yet with any news.'

"And that was true. He took this habitude of making a promenade almost every day to Petit Ingrat during that season of the year when the Americans are going down to the fish — là-bas — and if there was a schooner in the harbor, he finds the captain or one of the crew, and he says, 'Is it, m'sieu, for example, that you have seen a boy anywhere named Tommy Leblanc? It is my son — you understand? — a very pretty young boy, with black hair and fine white teeth and a little curly mustache — so — just beginning to sprout.' And he would go on to describe that Tommy, but of course, for one thing they could not understand his French very well, for the Americans, as you know, do not speak that language among themselves; and anyway, you may depend that none of them had ever heard of Tommy Leblanc; and sometimes they would have a little mockery of the old man; and sometimes, on the contrary, they would feel pity, and would say, well, God's name, it was a damage, but they could not tell him anything.

"And then the old man would say, 'Well, if ever you should see him anywhere, will you please tell him that his father is wanting him to come home, if he will be so kind as to do it; because it is very lonesome without him, and the mother is dead.'

"Then after he had said that, he would go back

again along the road to the Cape, not speaking to anybody unless they spoke to him first, and trailing one leg after him a little, like one of these horses you see sometimes with a weight tied to a hind foot so that it cannot run away — or at least not very far. That is how I remember old Siméon from the time when I was a little girl — walking there along the road to or from Petit Ingrat. I used to hear people say: 'Ah, my God, how old he is grown all in these few years! He is not the same man — so quiet and so timid' — and others: 'But can one say how it is possible for him to live there all alone like that?' — and someone replied: 'You could not persuade him to live anywhere else, for that is where he has all his memories, both the good and the bad, and what else is left for him now — that, and the crazy idea he has that his Tommy will one day come home again?'

"You see, as the years passed, everybody took the belief that Tommy must be dead, at sea or somewhere, seeing that not one word was heard of him; but of course they guarded themselves well from saying anything like that to poor old Siméon.

"Well, it was about the time when your poor father, Amédée, was a boy of your age, or a little older, that all this sorrow came to an end; and this is the pleasant part of the story. I was living at Madame Paon's then, down near the post-office wharf, and we had the habitude of looking out of the window every day when the packet-boat came in (which was three times a week) to see if anybody would be landing at

Port l'Évêque. Well, and one afternoon whom should we see but a fine m'sieu with black beard, carrying a cane, dressed like an American; and next, a lovely lady in clothes of the most fashionable and magnificent; and then, six beautiful young children, all just as handsome as dolls, and holding tightly one another by the hand, with an affection the most charming in the world. Ah, ma foi, if I shall ever forget that sight!

"And Madame Paon to me: 'Rose, — La Rose, — in God's name, who can they be! Perhaps some millionaires from Boston — for look, the trunks that they have!'

"And that was the truth, for the trunks and bags were piled all over the wharf; and opening the window a little, we hear m'sieu giving directions to have them taken to the Couronne d'Or — 'and who,' he asks in French, 'is the proprietor there now?' — and they say: 'Gaston Lebal' — and he says: 'What! Gaston Lebal! Is it possible!'

"'He knows Port l'Évêque, it seems,' says Madame Paon, all excitement; and just then the first two trunks go by the windows, and she tells me, 'It is an English name, or an American.' And then, spelling out the letters, for she reads with a marvel of ease, she says, 'W-H-I-T-E is what the trunks say on them; but I can make nothing out of that. I am going outside, me,' she says, 'and perhaps I shall learn something.'

"She descends into the garden, and seems to be working a little at the flowers, and a minute later, here comes the fine m'sieu, and he looks at her for an

instant — right in the face, so, and as if asking a question — and then: 'Ah, mon Dieu, it is Suzon Boudrot! he cries, using the name she was born with. ' Can you not remember me? — That Tommy Leblanc who ran away twenty years ago? '

" Madame Paon gives a scream of joy, and they embrace; and then he presents this Mees W'ite, qui est une belle Américaine, and then he says: ' What is there of news about my dear mother and my father? ' — and she: ' Did you not know your poor mother was dead the year after you went! ' — and he: ' Ma mère — she is dead? ' — and the tears jump out of his eyes, and his voice trembles as if it had a crack in it. ' Well, she is with the blessed angels, then,' says he.

" ' But your poor old father,' goes on Madame Paon, ' he is still waiting for you every day. He has waited all these twenty years for you to come back.'

" ' He is still in the old place? ' asks he.

" ' Yes, he would not leave it.'

" ' We shall go over there at once,' he says, opening out his two arms — so! — ' before ever we set foot in another house. It is my duty as a son.'

" So while André Gilet — the father of that dear Léonie who was taken in the chest — while he is getting the boat ready to cross the harbor, Tommy tells her how he has been up there in Boston all these years — at a place called Shee-cahgo, a big city — and has been making money; and how he changed his name to W'ite, which means the same as Leblanc and is more in

the mode; and how he married this lovely Américaine, whose name was Finnegan, and had all these sweet little children; but always, he said, he had desired to make a little visit at home, only it was so far to come; and he was afraid that his father would still be angry at him.

" 'Ah,' says Madame Paon, with emotion, ' you will not know your father. He is so different: just as mild as a sheep. Everyone has come to love him.' . . .

" Now for the rest of the story, all I know is what that André told us, for he put all this family across to the other side in his boat. So when they reached the shore, M'sieu Tommy, he says: ' You will all wait here until I open the door and beckon: and then you, Maggie, will come up; and then, a little later, we will have the children in, all together.'

"And with that he leaves them, and goes up to the old house, and knocks, and opens the door, and walks in — and who can say the joy and the comfort of the meeting that happened then? And quite a long while passed, André said; and that lovely lady sat there on the side of the boat, all as white as milk, and never saying a word; and those six lambs, whispering softly among themselves — and one of them said, just a little above its breath:

" ' It will be nice to have a grandpa all for ourselves, don't you think? ' — and was not that a dear sweet little thing for it to say? . . .

"And finally the door opens again, and see! and his

hand makes a sign; and that lady, swift as one of these sea-gulls, leaps ashore. And up the hill; and through the gate; and into the house! And the door shuts again.

"And another wait, while those six look at each other, and say their little things. And at last they are called too, and away they go, all together, just like one of these flocks of curlew that fly over the Cape, making those soft little sounds; and then into the house; and André said he had to wipe two tears out of his eyes to see a thing like that.

" Well, this was the end of old Siméon's grief, as you may well believe. Those W'ites stay at the Couronne d'Or for as much as nine or ten days, and every morning they will be going across to see their dear dear grandfather; and finally when they went away, they had hired that widow Bergère to keep his house comfortable for him; and M'sieu Tommy left money for all needs.

"And every Christmas after that, so long as old Siméon existed, there would come boxes of presents from that place in Boston. Oh, I assure you, he did not lack that good care. And always he must be talking about that Tommy of his, who was so rich, and was some great personage in the city — what they called an alderman — and yet he had not forgotten his poor old father, who had waited all those years to see him.

" So this story shows that sometimes things turn out

just as well in this life down here as they do in those silly stories they tell you about princesses and all those things that are not so; and that is a comfort sometimes, when you see so much that is sad and heartbreaking in this world. . . . "

A CALVAIRE

AT A BRETON CALVAIRE

AT A BRETON CALVAIRE

Upon that cape that thrusts so bare
  Its crest above the wasting sea —
  Grey rocks amidst eternity —
There stands an old and frail calvaire,
  Upraising like an unvoiced cry
  Its great black arms against the sky.

For storm-beat years that cross has stood:
  It slants before the winter gale;
  And now the Christ is marred and pale;
The rain has washed away the blood
  That ran once on its brow and side,
  And in its feet the seams are wide.

But when the boats put out to sea
  At earliest dawn before the day,
  The fishermen, they turn and pray,
Their eyes upon the calvary:
  " O Jesu, Son of Mary fair,
  Our little boats are in thy care! "

And when the storm beats hard and shrill
  Then toil-bent women, worn with fear,
  Pray for the lives they hold so dear,
And seek the cross upon the hill:
  " O Jesu, Son of Mary mild,
  Be with them where the waves are wild! "

And when the dead they carry by
  Across that melancholy land, —
  Dead that were cast up on the strand
Beneath a black and whirling sky, —
  They pause before the old calvaire;
  They cross themselves and say a prayer.

. . . . . .

O Jesu, Son of Mary fair!
  O Faith, that seeks thy cross of pain!
  Their voices break above the rain,
The wind blows hard, the heart lies bare:
  Clutching through dark, their hands find Thee,
  O Christ, that died on Calvary!

THE PRIVILEGE

THE PRIVILEGE

TO-DAY I can think about only one thing. It is in vain I have tried to busy myself with my sermon for next Sunday. Last week, for another reason, I had recourse to an old sermon; but I dislike to make a practice of so doing, even though I strongly suspect that none of our little Salmon River congregation would know the difference. We are a very simple people, in this out-of-the-way Cape Breton parish, called mostly to be fishers, like Our Lord's apostles, and recking not a whit of the finer points of doctrine. Nevertheless, it is an hireling shepherd who is faithless only because the flock do not ask to be fed with the appointed manna; and I shall broach the sermon again, once I have set down the thing that is so heavy on my heart.

For all I can think of just now is that Renny and Suse, out there on Halibut Head, four miles away, are alone; alone for the first time in well-nigh thirty years. The last of the brood has taken wing.

Yet it came to me this morning, as I watched Renny on the wharf saying good-by to the boy, and bidding him wrap the tippet snug about his neck in case the wind would be raw — it came to me that there is a triumph about the nest when it is empty that it could never have earlier. I saw the look of it in Renny's face — not defeat, but exultation.

"And what are you going to do now, Renny?" I asked him, as the steamer slipped out of sight behind the lighthouse rock.

He stared at me a little contemptuously, a manner he has always had.

"*Do,* Mr. Biddles?" says he, with a queer laugh. "Why, what *would* I do, sor? They ain't no less fish to be catched, is they, off Halibut Head, just because I got quit of a son or two?"

He left me, with a toss of his crisp, tawny-gray curls, jumped into his little two-wheeled cart, and was off. And I thought, "Ah, Renny Marks, outside you are still the same wild beast as when I had my first meeting with you, two-and-thirty years ago; but inside — yes, I knew then it must come; and it was not for me to order the how of it."

So as I took my way homeward, alone, toward the Rectory, I found myself recalling, as if it were yesterday, the first words I had ever exchanged with that tawny giant, just then in his first flush of manhood, and with a face as ruddy and healthy-looking as one of these early New Rose potatoes. Often, to be sure, I had seen him already in church, of a Sunday, sitting defiant and uncomfortable on one of the rear benches, struggling vainly to keep his eyes open; but before the last Amen was fairly out of the people's mouth, he had always bolted for the door; and I had never come, as you may say, face to face with him until this afternoon when I was footing it back, by the cove road, from a visit to an old sick woman, Nannie Odell. And

here comes Renny Marks on his way home from the boat; and over his shoulder was the mainsail and gaff and a mackerel-seine and two great oars; and by one arm he had slung the rudder and tackle and bait-pot; and under the other he lugged a couple of bundles of lath for to mend his traps; and so he was pacing along there as proud and careless as Samson bearing away the gates of Gaza on his back (*Judges* xvi, 3).

Now I had entertained the belief for some time that it was my duty, should the occasion offer, to have a serious word with Renny about matters not temporal; and this was clearly the moment. Yet even before we had met he gave me one of those proud, distrustful, I have said contemptuous, looks of his; and I seemed suddenly to perceive the figure I must cut in his eyes, pattering along there so trimly in my clerical garb, and with my book of prayers under one arm; and, do you know, I was right tongue-tied; and so we came within hand-reach, and still never a word.

At last, "Good-day to ye, Mister Biddles," says he, with a scant, off-hand nod; and, as if he knew I must be admiring of his strength, "I can fetch twice this load, sor," says he, "without so mucht as knowing the difference."

"It's a fine thing, Renny Marks," said I, gaining my tongue again, at his boast, "a fine thing to be the strongest man in three parishes, if that's what ye be, as they tell me."

"It is that, sor," says he. "I never been cast yet; and I don't never expect for to be."

" But it's still finer a thing, Renny," I went on, " to use that strength in the honor of your Maker. Tell me, do you remember to say your prayers every night before you go to bed? "

Never shall I forget the horse-laugh the young fellow had at those words.

" Why, sor," he exclaimed, as if I had suggested the most unconscionable thing in the world, " saying prayers! that's for the likes of them as wash their face every day. I say my prayers on Sunday; and that's enough for the likes of me! "

And with that, not even affording me a chance to reply, he strode off up the beach road; and in every movement of his great limbs I seemed to see the pride and glory of life. Doubtless I was to blame for not pressing home to him more urgently at that moment the claims of religion; but as I stood there, watching him, it came to me that after all he was almost to be pardoned for being proud. For surely there is something to warm the heart in the sight of the young lion's strength and courage; and even the Creator, I thought, must have taken delight in turning out such a fine piece of mortal handiwork as that Renny Marks.

But with that thought immediately came another: " Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth " (*Hebrews* xii, 6). And I went home sadly, for I seemed to see that Renny had bitter things ahead of him before he should learn the great lesson of life.

Well, and this is the way it came to him. At the age

of four-and-twenty, he married this Suse Barlow from down the coast a piece, — Green Harbor was the name of the town, — and she was a sweet young thing, gentle and ladylike, though of plainest country stock, and with enough education so they'd let her keep school down there. He built a little house for her, the one they still live in, with his own hands, at Halibut Head; and I never saw anything prettier than the way that young giant treated his wife — like a princess! It was the first time in his life, I dare say, he had ever given a thought to anything but himself; and in a fashion, I suppose, 'twas still but a satisfaction of his pride, to have her so beautiful, and so well-dressed.

I remember of how often they would come in late to church, — even as late as the Te Deum, — and I could almost suspect him of being behindhand of purpose, for of course every one would look around when he came creaking down the aisle in his big shoes, with a wide smile on his ruddy face that showed all his white teeth through his beard; and none could fail to observe how fresh and pretty Suse was, tripping along there behind him, and looking very demure and modest in her print frock, and oh, so very, very sorry to be late! And during the prayers I had to remark how his face would always be turned straight toward her, as if it were to her he was addressing his supplications; the young heathen!

Now there is one thing I never could seem to understand, though I have often turned it over in my mind, and that is, why it should be that a young Samson like

Renny Marks, and a fine, bouncing girl like that Suse of his, should have children who were too weak and frail to stay long on this earth; but such was the case. They saved only three out of six; and the oldest of those three, Michael John, when he got to be thirteen years of age, shipped as cabin boy on a fisherman down to the Grand Banks, and never came back. So that left only Bessie Lou, who was twelve, and little Martin, who was the baby.

If ever children had a good bringing up, it was those two. I never saw either of them in a dirty frock or in bare feet; and that means something, you must allow, when you consider the hardness of the fisherman's life, and how often he has nothing at all to show for a season's toil except debts! But work — I never saw any one work like that Renny; and he made a lovely little farm out there; and Suse wasn't ashamed to raise chickens and sell them in Salmon River; and she dyed wool, and used to hook these rugs, with patterns of her own design, baskets of flowers, or handsome fruit-dishes; and almost always she could get a price for them. But, as you may believe, she couldn't keep her sweet looks with work like that. Before she was thirty she began to look old, as is so often true in a hard country like ours; and not often would she be coming in to church any more, because, she said, of the household duties; but my own belief is that she did not have anything to wear. But Bessie Lou and little Martin, when the boy was well enough, were there every fine Sunday, as pretty as pictures, and able to

recite the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, and the Collects, and the Commandments, quite like the children of gentlefolk.

Well, when Bessie Lou got to be sixteen, she took it into her head that she must go off to Boston, where she would be earning her own living, and see something more of the world than is possible for a girl in Salmon River. Our girls all get that notion nowadays; they are not content to stay at home as girls used to do; but off they go in droves to the States, where wages are big, and there is excitement and variety. So the old people finally said yes, and off goes Bessie Lou, like the others; and in two years we heard she was to be married to a mechanic in Lynn (I think that is the name of the city) somewhere outside of Boston. She has been gone eight years now, and has three children; and she writes occasionally. She is always wishing she could come down and visit the old folks; but it is hard to get away, I presume, and they are plain working people.

So after Bessie Lou's going, all they had left at home was Martin, who was always ailing more or less. And on my word, I never saw anything like the care they gave that boy. There wasn't anything too good for him. All these most expensive tonics and patent medicines they would be for trying, one after another, and telling themselves every time that at last they had found just the right thing, because he'd seem to be bracing up a bit, and getting more active. And then he would take another of his bad spells, and lose ground again; and they would put by that bottle and

try something else. One day when I was out there his ma showed me all of twenty bottles of patent medicine, some of them scarcely touched, that Renny had got for him, one time or another.

You see, Martin couldn't run about outdoors very much because of his asthma; and then, his eyes being bad, that made him unhappy in the house, for he couldn't be reading or studying. His father got him an old fiddle once, he'd picked up at an auction, and the boy took to it something wonderful; but not having any teacher and no music he soon grew tired of it. And whenever old Renny would be in the village, he must always be getting some little thing to take out to Martin: a couple of bananas, say, or a jack-knife, or one of those American magazines with nice pictures, especially pictures of ships and other sailing craft, of which the lad was very fond.

Well, and so last winter came, which was a very bad winter indeed, in these parts; and the poor lamb had a pitiful hard time; and whenever Renny got in to church, it was plain to see that he was eating his heart out with worry. He still had his old way of always snoring during the sermon; but oh, if you could see once the tired, anxious, supplicating look in his face, as soon as his proud eyes shut, you never would have had the heart to wish anything but " Sleep on now, and take your rest " (*Mark* xiv, 41), for you knew that perhaps, for a few minutes, he had stopped worrying about that little lad of his.

Spring came on, at last, and Martin was out again

for a while every day in the sun; and sometimes the old man would be taking him abroad for a drive or for a little sail in the boat, when he was going out to his traps; and it appeared that the strain was over again for the time being. That is why I was greatly surprised and troubled one day, about two months ago, to see Renny come driving up toward the Rectory like mad, all alone in his cart.

I had just been doing a turn of work myself at the hay; for it is hard to get help with us when you need it most; and as I came from the barn, in my shirt-sleeves, Renny turned in at the gate.

"Something has happened to the boy," was my thought; and I was all but certain of it when I saw the man's face, sharp set as a flint stone, and all the blood gone from his ruddy skin so that it looked right blue. He jumped out before the mare stopped, and came up to me.

"Can I have a word with ye?" said he; and when he saw my look of question, he added, "It ain't nothink, sor. He's all right."

I put my hand on his shoulder, and led him into my study, and we sat down there, just as we were, I in my shirt-sleeves, and still unwashed after the hayfield.

"What is it, Renny, man?" says I.

It seemed like he could not make his lips open for a moment, and then, suddenly, he began talking very fast and excitedly, pecking little dents in the arms of the chair with his big black fingernails.

"That Bessie Lou of oors up to Boston," said he, as

if he were accusing some one of an outrage, " we got a letter from 'er last night, we did, and she sayse, says she, why wouldn't we be for a-sending o' the leetle lad up theyr? They'd gladly look oot for him, she sayse: and the winter ain't severe, she sayse; and he could go to one o' them fine city eye-doctors and 'ave his eyes put right with glasses or somethink; and prob'ly he could be for going to school again and a-getting of his learning, which he's sadly be'indhand in, sor, becaust he's ben ailing so much."

His eyes flashed, and the sweat poured down his forehead in streams.

I don't know why I was so slow to understand; but I read his look wrong, there seemed so much of the old insolence and pride in it, and I replied, I daresay a little reproachfully, —

" Well, and why wouldn't that be an excellent thing, Renny? I should think you would feel grateful."

He stared at me for a second, as if I had struck him. Ah, we can forget the words people say to us, even in wrath; but can we ever free ourselves from the memory of such a look? Without knowing why, I had the feeling of being a traitor. And then, all of a sudden, there he had crumpled down in his chair, and put his head in his big hands, and was sobbing.

" I cain't — I cain't let him go," he groaned. " I woon't let him go. He's all what we got left."

I sat there for a time, helpless, looking at him. You might think that a priest, with the daily acquaintance he has with the bitter things of life, ought to know how

to face them calmly; but so far as my own small experience goes, I seem to know nothing more about all that than at the beginning. It always hurts just as much; it's always just as bewildering, just as terrible, as if you had never seen anything like it before. And when I saw that giant of a Renny Marks just broken over there like some big tree shattered by lightning, it seemed as if I could not bear to face such suffering. Then I remembered that he had been committed into my care by God, and that I must not be only an hireling shepherd. So I said: —

" Renny, lad, it isn't for ourselves we must be thinking. It's for him."

He lifted up his head, with the shaggy, half-gray hair all rumpled on his wet forehead, and pulled his sleeve across his eyes.

" Hark'e, Mister Biddles," he commanded harshly. "Ain't we did the best we could for him? Who dares say we ain't did the best we could for him? *You?*"

I made no answer, and for a minute we faced each other, while he shook his clenched fists at me, and the creature in him that had never yet been cast challenged all the universe.

" They're tryin' to tak my boy away from me," he roared, " and they cain't do it — I tell you they cain't. He's all what we got left, now."

"And so you mean to keep him for yourself?" I asked.

"Ay, that I do," he cried, jumping out of his chair, and striding up and down the room as if clean out of

his wits. "I do! I do! Why *wouldn't* I mean to, hey? Ain't he mine? Who's got a better right to him?"

Of a sudden he comes to a dead halt in front of me, with his arms crossed. "Mister Biddles," he says, very bitterly, "you may well be thankfu' you never wast a father yoursel'. Nobody ain't for trying to tak nothink away from you."

"That's quite true, Renny," said I. "But remember," I said, not intending any irreverence, but uttering such poor words as were given to me in my extremity, "remember, Renny, it's to a Father you say your prayers in church every Sunday; and you needn't think as that Father doesn't know full as well as you what it is to give up an only Son for love's sake."

"Hey? — What's that, sor?" cries Renny, with a face right like a dead thing.

"And would He be asking of you for to let yours go, if He didn't know there was love enough in your heart to stand the test?"

Renny broke out with a terrible groan, like the roar of anguish of a wild beast that has got a mortal wound; and the same instant the savage look died in his eyes, and the bigger love in him had triumphed over the smaller love. I could see it, I knew it, even before he spoke. He caught at my hand, blunderingly, and gave it a twist like a winch.

"He shall go, sor. He shall go for all of I. And Mr. Biddles, while I'm for telling the old woman and the boy, would ye be so condescending as to say over some of them there prayers, so I could have the feel-

ing, as you might say, that some one was keeping an eye on me? It'll all be done in less nor a half-hour."

And with that, off he goes, and jumps into his cart, and whips up the mare, tearing down the road like a whirlwind, just as he had come, without so much as saying good-by. And the next day I heard them saying in the village that Renny Marks's boy was to go up to the States to be raised with his sister's family.

Ah, well, that's only a common sort of a story, I know. The same kind of things happen near us every day. I can't even quite tell why I wanted to set it down on paper like this, only that, some way, it makes me believe in God more; even when I have to remember, and it seems to me just now like I could never stop remembering it, that Renny and Suse are all alone to-day out there on Halibut Head. Renny is at the fish, of course; and Suse, I daresay, is working in her little potato patch; and Martin is out there on the sea, being borne to a world far away, and from which, I suppose, he will not be very anxious to return; for few of them do come back, nowadays, to the home country.

FOUGÈRE'S COVE

THEIR TRUE LOVE

THEIR TRUE LOVE

EVEN Zabette, with her thousand wrinkles, was young once. They say her lips were red as wild strawberries and her hair as sleek as the wing of a blackbird in spring. All the old people of St. Esprit remember how she used to swing along the street on her way to mass of a Sunday, straight, proud, agile as a goat, with her dark head flung back, and a disdainful smile on her lips that kept young men from being unduly forward. The country people, who must have their own name for everything and everybody, used to call her "la belle orgueilleuse," and sometimes, "the highstepper"; and though they had to laugh at her a little for her lofty ways, they found it quite natural to address her as mademoiselle.

But all these things one only knows by hearsay. Zabette does not talk much herself. So far as she is concerned, you might never guess that she had a story at all. She lives there in the little dormer-windowed cottage beyond the post-office with Suzanne Benoît. For thirty-three years now the two women have lived together; and it is the earnest prayer of both of them that when the time for going arrives, they may go together.

These two good souls have the reputation, all over the country, of immense industry and thrift. Suzanne

keeps three cows, and her butter is famous. Zabette — she was a Fuseau, from the Grande Anse — takes in washing of the better class. Nobody in St. Esprit can do one of those stiff white linen collars so well as she. Positively, it shines in the sun like a looking-glass. If you notice the men going to church, you can always pick out those who have their shirts and collars done by Zabette Fuseau. By comparison, the others appear dull and very commonplace.

" But why must Zabette do collars for her living? " you are asking. " Why has she not a man of her own to look out for her, and half a dozen grown up children? Did she never marry, then — this belle orgueilleuse? "

No. Never. But not on account of that pride of hers; at least not directly. If you go into the pretty little living-room of the second cottage beyond the post-office — the one with such a show of geraniums in the front windows — you will guess half the secret, for just above the mantelpiece, between two vases of artificial asters, hangs the daguerreotype portrait of a young man in mariner's slops. The lineaments have so faded with the years that it is difficult to make them out with any assurance. It is as if the portrait itself were seeking to escape from life, retreating little by little, imperceptibly, into the dull shadows of the ground, so that only as you look at it from a certain angle can you still clearly distinguish the small dark eyes, the full moustache, the round chin, the square stocky shoulders of the subject. Only the two rosy

spots added by the daguerreotypist to the cheeks defy time and change, indestructible token of youth and ardor.

A little frame of immortelles encloses the portrait. And directly in front of it, on the mantelpiece, stands a pretty shell box, with the three words on the mother-of-pearl lid: "À ma chérie." What is in the box — if anything — no one can tell you for a certainty, though there are plenty of theories. "Love letters," say some; and others, with a pitying laugh, "Old maid's tears."

Zabette and Suzanne hold their tongues. I think I know what the treasure of the box is; for I had the story directly from a very aged woman who knew both the "girls" when they were young; and she vouched for the truth of it by all the beads of her rosary. This is how it went.

Zabette Fuseau was eighteen, and she lived at the Grand Anse, two miles out of St. Esprit; and the procession of young fellows, going there to woo, was like a pilgrimage, exactly. Among them came one from far down the coast, a place called Rivière Bourgeoise. He was a deep sea fisherman, from off a vessel which had put in at St. Esprit for repairs, mid-course to the Grand Banks; and on his first shore leave Maxence had caught sight of la belle orgueilleuse, who had come into town with a basket of eggs; and he had followed her home, at a little distance, sighing, but without the courage to address her so long as they were in the village. He was a very handsome young fellow, with a

brown, ruddy skin, and the most beautiful dark curly hair and crisp moustache imaginable.

Zabette knew he was behind her; but she would not turn; not she; only walked a little more proudly and gracefully, with that swinging movement of hers, like a vessel sailing in a head wind. At last, when they had reached the Calvaire at the end of the village, he managed to get out his first word.

"Oh!" he cried, haltingly. "Mademoiselle!"

She turned half about and fixed her dark proud eyes upon him, while her cheeks crimsoned.

"Well, m'sieur?"

He could not speak, and the two stared at each other for a long time in silence, while the thought came to her that this was the man for whom she was destined.

"Had you something to say to me?" she repeated, finally, in a tone that tried to be severe, but was really very soft.

He nodded his curly head, and licked his lips hard to moisten them.

"I cannot wait any longer," she protested, after a while. "They need me at home."

She turned quickly again, as if to go; but her feet were glued to the ground, and she did not take a step.

"Oh, s'il vous plaît, mam'selle!" he cried, to hold her. "You think I am rude. But I did not mean to follow you like this. I could not help it. You are so beautiful."

The look he gave her with those words sank deep into her heart and rooted itself there forever. In vain,

for the rest of her life, she might try to tear it out; there was a fatality about it. Zabette, fine highstepper that she was, had been caught at last. She knew that she ought to send the handsome young sailor away; but her tongue would not obey her. Instead, it uttered some very childish words of confusion and pleasure; and before she knew it, there was her man walking along at her side, with one hand on his heart, declaring that she was the most angelic creature in the world, that he was desperately in love with her, that he could not live without her, and that she must promise then and there to be his, or he would instantly kill himself. The burning, impassioned look in his eyes struck her with dismay.

" But I cannot decide all in a moment like this," she protested, in a weak voice. " It would be indecent. I must think."

" Think! " he retorted, bitterly. " Oh, very well. Then you do not love me! "

"Ah, but I do! " she cried, all trembling.

With that he took her in his arms and kissed her, and nothing more was heard about suicide or any such subject.

" But we must not tell any one yet," she pleaded. " They would not understand."

He agreed, with the utmost readiness. " We will not tell a soul. It shall be exactly as you wish. But I may come and see you? "

" Oh, certainly," she responded. " Often, — that is, every day or two, — at Grande Anse; and perhaps we

may happen to meet sometimes in the village, as well."

"The *Soleil* will be delaying at St. Esprit for two weeks," he explained, as they walked along, hand in hand. "She put in for some repairs. By the end of that time, perhaps" —

"Oh, no, not so soon as that," she interrupted. "We must let a longer while pass first."

She gazed at him yearningly. "You will be returning by here in the autumn, at the end of the season on the Banks?"

"We are taking on three men from St. Esprit," he answered. "We shall stop here on the return to set them ashore. That will be in October, near the end of the month, if the season is good."

She sighed, as if dreading some disaster; and they looked at each other again, and the look ended in a kiss. It is not by words, that new love feeds and grows.

Before they reached the Grande Anse he quitted her; but he gave her his promise to come again that evening. He did — that evening, and two evenings later, and so on, every other evening for those two weeks. Zabette's old mother took a great fancy to him, and gave him every encouragement; but the old père Fuseau, who had sailed many a voyage, in younger days, round the Horn, would never speak a good word for him — and perhaps his hostility only increased the girl's attachment.

"A little grease is all very well for the hair of a young man," he would say. "But this scented pomade they use nowadays — pah!"

" You object then to a sailor's being a gentleman? " demanded the girl haughtily.

" Yes, I do," roared the old père Fuseau. " Have a care, Zabette."

Nevertheless, the two lovers found plenty of chances to be alone together; and they would talk, in low voices, of their happiness and of the future, which looked very bright to Zabette, despite all the uncertainties of the sea.

" When we put in on the return from the Banks," said Maxence, " you will be at the wharf to meet me; and that very day we will announce our fiancailles. What an astonishment for everybody! "

"And then," she asked — " after that? "

"After that, I will stay ashore for a while. They can do without me on the *Soleil.* And at the end of a month " — he told her the rest with a kiss; and surely Zabette had never been so happy in her life.

But for the time being the affair was kept very, very secret, so that people might not get to gossiping. Even those frequent expeditions of Maxence to the Grande Anse were not remarked, for he always came after dusk: and when the fortnight was over and the *Soleil* once more was ready for sea, the two sweethearts exchanged keepsakes, and he left her.

" I will send you a letter from St. Pierre Miquelon," he said, to cheer her, while he wiped away her tears with a silk handkerchief.

" Do you promise? " she asked.

He promised. Three weeks later the letter arrived; and it told her that his heart was breaking for his dear

little Zabette. "Sois fidèle — be true," were the last words. The letter had a perfume of pomade about it, and she carried it all summer in her bodice, taking it out many times a day to scan the loving words again.

In St. Esprit, when the fishing fleet begins to return from the Banks, they keep an old man on the lookout in the church tower; and as soon as he sights a vessel in the offing, he rings the bell.

It was the fourth week in October that year before the bell was heard; and then rapidly, two or three at a time, the schooners came in. First the *Dame Blanche,* which was always in the lead; then the *Êtoile,* the *Deux Frères,* the *Lottie B.,* and the *Milo.* Every day, morning or afternoon, the bell would ring, and poor Zabette must find some excuse or other to be in town. Down at the wharf there was always gathered an anxious throng, watching for the appearance of the vessel round the Cape. And when she was visible at last, there would be cries of joy from some, and silence on the part of others. Zabette was among the silent. When she saw the happiness about her, tears would swim unbidden in her eyes; but of course she did not lose heart, for still there were several vessels to arrive, and no disasters had been reported by the earlier comers. People noticed her, standing there with expectant mien, and they wondered what it could be that brought her; but it was not their habit to ask questions of the fine highstepper.

There was another young girl on the wharf, too, who had the air of looking for some one — a certain

Suzanne Benoît, from l'Étang, three miles inshore, a very pretty girl, with a mild, appealing look in her brown eyes. Zabette had seen her often here and there; but she had no acquaintance with her. At the present moment, strangely enough, she felt herself powerfully drawn to this Suzanne. It came to her, somehow, that the girl had come thither on a mission similar to her own, she was so silent, and had not the look of those who had waited on the wharf in previous years. And so, one afternoon, when two vessels had rounded the Cape and were entering the harbor, amid a great hubbub of expectancy, — and neither of them was the *Soleil,* — Zabette surprised a look of woe in the face of the other which she could not resist. She went over to her, with some diffidence, and offered a few words of sympathy.

"You are waiting for some one, too?" she asked her.

The eyes of the other filled quickly to overflowing. "Yes," she answered. "He has not come yet."

"You must not worry," said Zabette, stoutly. "There are always delays, you know. Some are ahead; others behind; it is so every year."

The girl gave her a grateful look, and squeezed her hand. "It is a secret," she murmured.

Zabette smiled. "I have a secret too."

"Then we are waiting together," said Suzanne. "That makes it so much easier!"

They walked back to the street, arm in arm, as if they had always been bosom friends. And the next

day they were both at the wharf again. The afternoon was bleak; but as usual they were in their best clothes.

" Oh, it does not seem as if I could wait any longer," whispered Suzanne, confidingly. " I do hope it will be the *Soleil* this time."

" The *Soleil!* " exclaimed Zabette, joyfully. " You are waiting for the *Soleil?* "

And at the other's nod, she went on. " How lovely that we are expecting the same vessel. Oh, I am sure it will come to-day — or certainly to-morrow."

The two girls felt themselves very close together, now that they had shared so much of their secret; and it made the waiting less hard to bear.

" Is he handsome, your man? " asked Suzanne, timidly.

" Ravishing," replied Zabette, eagerly. "And yours? "

Suzanne sighed with adoration. " Beyond words," was her reply — and the girls exchanged another of those pressures of the hand which mean so much where love is concerned. " He has the most beautiful moustache in the world."

" Oh, no," protested Zabette, smilingly. " Mine has a more beautiful one yet, and such crisp curly hair, and dark eyes."

Her companion suddenly looked at her. " Large eyes or small? " she asked in a strange voice.

" Oh," replied Zabette, doubtfully. " Not too large. I would not fancy ox eyes in a man."

Suzanne freed herself and stood facing her with a flash of hatred in her mild face which Zabette could not understand.

"And his name!" she demanded, harshly. "His name, then!"

Zabette smiled a little proudly. "That is my secret," she replied. "But, Suzanne, what is the matter?"

"It is not your secret," laughed the other, bitterly. "It is not your secret. It is my secret."

"What do you mean?" cried Zabette, with a sudden feeling of terror at the girl's drawn face.

"His name is Maxence!" Suzanne's laugh was like bones rattling in a coffin.

It seemed to Zabette as if a flash of lightning had cleft her soul in two. That was the way the truth came to her. She drew back like a viper ready to strike.

"Oh, I hate you!" she cried, and turned on her heel, white to the eyes with anger and shame.

But Suzanne would not leave her. She followed to the other side of the wharf, and as soon as she could speak again without attracting attention, she said, more kindly:

"I am very sorry for you, Zabette. It is too bad you were so mistaken. Why, he was engaged to me the very second day he came ashore."

Zabette stifled back a cry, and retorted, icily, "He was engaged to me the first day. He followed me all the way to the Grande Anse."

Suzanne's eyes glittered, this time. "He followed me all the way to l'Étang. He is mine."

Zabette brought out, through white lips, " Leave me alone. He was mine first."

" He was mine last," retaliated the other, undauntedly. " The very morning he went away, he came to see me. Did he come to you that day? Did he? Did he? "

Zabette ignored her question. " He wrote me a letter from St. Pierre Miquelon," she announced, crisply. " So that settles it, first and last."

The hand of Suzanne suddenly lifted to her bosom, as if feeling for something. " My letter was written at St. Pierre, too."

For an instant they glared at each other like wild animals fighting over prey. Neither said a word. Neither yielded a hair. Each felt that her life's happiness was at stake. Zabette had thought that this chit of a girl from l'Étang was mild and timid; but now she realized that she had met her match for courage. And the thought came to her: " When he sees us, let him choose."

She was not conscious of having uttered the words. Perhaps her glance, swiftly directed toward the Cape, conveyed the thought to her rival. At all events the answer came promptly and with complete self-assurance:

" Yes, let Maxence choose."

Just at that moment the first vessel appeared at the harbor entrance, while the bell redoubled its jubilation in the church tower on the hill.

" The *Mercure!* " cried an old woman. " Thank God! "

And a few minutes later, there was the *Anne-Marie,* all sail set over her green hull; and then a vessel which at first no one seemed to recognize.

"Which is that?" they asked. "Oh, it must be — yes, it is the *Soleil,* from Rivière Bourgeoise. She has several men from here aboard."

With eyes that seemed to be starting from her head, Zabette watched the *Soleil* entering the harbor. She could distinguish forms on deck. She saw handkerchiefs waving. At last she could begin to make out the faces a little. But she did not discover the one she sought. Holding tight to a mooring post, unable to think, unable to do anything but watch, it seemed to her that hours passed before the schooner cast anchor and a boat was put over. There were four persons in it: the mate and the three men from St. Esprit. They rowed rapidly to the wharf; and the three men threw up their gunny sacks and climbed the ladder, one after the other.

The mate was just about to put off again when Zabette spoke to him. She leaned over the edge of the wharf, reaching out a detaining hand.

"M'sieur!"

At the same instant the word was uttered by another voice close by. She looked up and saw Suzanne, very white, in the same attitude.

"What is it, mesdemoiselles?" asked the mate, touching his vizor.

As if by concerted arrangement came the question from both sides.

"And Maxence?"

The man answered them seriously and directly, perceiving from their manner that his reply was of great import to these two, whatever the reason for it might be.

"Maxence? — But we do not know where he is. There was a fog. He was out in a dory, alone. We picked up the dory the next day. Perhaps" — he shrugged his shoulders incredulously — "perhaps he might have been picked up by another vessel. Who can say?"

The girls gave him no answer. They reeled, and would have fallen, save that each found support in the other's arms. Sinking to the string piece of the wharf, they buried their faces on each other's shoulders and sobbed. Happy fathers and mothers and sweethearts, gathered on the wharf, looked at them in wonder, and left them alone, ignorant of the cause of their grief. So a long time passed, and still they crouched there, tight clasped, with buried heads.

"He was so good, so brave!" sobbed Suzanne.

"I loved him so much," repeated Zabette, over and over.

"I shall die without him," moaned Suzanne.

"So shall I," responded the other. "I cannot bear to live any longer."

"If only I had a picture of him, that would be some comfort," said the poor girl from l'Étang.

"I have one," said Zabette, sitting up straight and putting some orderly touches to her disarranged *mouchoir*. "He gave it to me the very last night."

Suzanne looked at her enviously, and mopped her red eyes. "All I have," she sighed, "is a little shell box he brought me, with the motto, *À ma chérie*. He gave me that the very last morning of all. It is very beautiful, but no one but me has seen it yet."

"You must show it to me sometime," said Zabette. "I have a right to see it."

"If you will let me look at the picture," consented the other, guardedly.

"Yes, you may look at it," said Zabette, "so long as you do not forget that it belongs to me."

"To you!" retorted the other. "And have you a better right to it than I, seeing that he would have been my husband in a month's time? You are a bad, cruel girl; you have no heart. It is a mercy he escaped the traps you set for him — my poor Maxence!"

A thousand taunting words came to Zabette's lips, but she controlled herself, rose to her feet with a show of dignity, and quitted the wharf. She resolved that she would never speak to that Benoît girl again. To do so was only to be insulted.

She went back to her home on the Grande Anse and endeavored to take up her everyday life again as though nothing had happened. She hid her grief from the neighbors, even from her own parents, who had never suspected the strength of her attachment for Maxence. By day she could keep herself busy about the house, and the secret would only be a dull pain; but at night, especially when the wind blew, it would gnaw and gnaw at her heart like a hungry beast.

At last she could keep it to herself no longer. She must share her misery. But there was only one person in the world who could understand. She declared to herself that nothing would induce her to go to l'Étang; and yet, as if under a spell, she made ready for the journey.

"Where are you going, my Zabette?" asked her old mother.

"To l'Étang," she answered. "I hear there is a girl these who makes a special brown dye for wool."

"Well, the walk will do you good, ma fille. You have been indoors too much lately. You are growing right pale and ill-looking."

"Oh, it is nothing, maman. I never feel very brisk, you know, in November. 'Tis such a dreary month."

She took a back road across the barrens to l'Étang. Scarcely any one traveled it except in winter to fetch kindling wood from the scrub fir that grew there. Consequently Zabette was much surprised, after walking about a mile and a half, to discover that some one was approaching from the opposite direction — a woman, with a red shawl across her shoulders. Gradually the distance between them lessened; and then she saw, with a start, that it was Suzanne Benoît. Her knees began to tremble under her. When they met, at last, no words would come to her lips: they only looked at each other with questioning, hunted eyes, then embraced, weeping, and sat down silently on a moss-hummock beside the road. Zabette had not felt so comforted since the disaster of October. For the first time she could

let the tears flow without any fear of detection. At last she said, very calmly:

" I have brought the picture."

She drew it out from under her coat, and held it on her knees, where Suzanne could see it.

"And here is the shell box," rejoined her companion. " I do not know how to read, me; but there are the words — *À ma chérie.* It's pretty — *hein?* "

Each gazed at the other's treasure.

"Ah," sighed Suzanne, mournfully. " How handsome he was to look at — and so true and brave! "

" I shall never love another," said Zabette, with sad conviction — " never. Love is over for me."

"And for me," said Suzanne. " But we have our memories."

" Mine," corrected Zabette. " You are forgetting."

" Did he ever give you a present that said *À ma chérie?* " demanded Suzanne, pointedly.

The other explained blandly: " You cannot say anything, my dear, on the back of a tintype. — But I have my letter from St. Pierre."

She showed it.

" Even if I cannot read mine," declared the girl from l'Étang, hotly, " I know it is fully as nice as yours. Nicer! "

" Oh, can I never see you but you must insult me! " cried Zabette. " Keep your old box and your precious letter from St. Pierre Miquelon. What can they matter to me? "

Without a word of good-by she sprang to her feet

and set out for the Grande Anse. She did not see the Benoît girl again that winter; but she could not help thinking about her, sometimes with sympathy, sometimes with bitter hatred. The young men came flocking to her home, as usual, vying with one another in attentions to her, for not only was Zabette known as the handsomest girl in three parishes, but also as an excellent housekeeper — " good saver, rare spender."

She would not encourage any of them, however.

" If I marry," she said to herself, " it is giving Maxence over to that l'Étang girl. She will crow about it. She will say, 'At last he is mine altogether. She has surrendered.' No, I could not stand that."

So that winter passed, and the next summer, and other winters and summers. Zabette did not marry; and after a time she began hearing herself spoken of as an old maid. The young men flocked to other houses, not hers. At the end of twelve years both her father and mother were dead, and she was alone in the world, thirty, and unprovided for.

It was, of course, fated, that these two women whose lives had been so strangely entangled should drift together again, sooner or later. So long as both were young and could claim love for themselves, jealousy was bound to separate them; but when they found themselves quite alone in the world, no longer beautiful, no longer arousing thoughts of love in the breast of another, the memory of all that was most precious in their lives drew them together as surely as a magnet draws two bits of metal.

It was after mass, one Sunday, that Zabette sought out her rival finally and found the courage to propose a singular plan.

"You are alone, Suzanne," she said. "So am I. We are both poor. Come and live with me."

"And you will give me Maxence?" asked Suzanne, a little hardly.

"No. But I will give you half of him. See, why should we quarrel any more? He is dead. Let us be reasonable. After this he shall belong to both of us."

Still the *vieille fille* from l'Étang held back, though her eyes softened.

"All these years," she said, with a remnant of defiance — "all these years he has been mine. I did not get married, me, because that would have let him belong to you."

Zabette sighed wearily. "And all these years I have been saying the same thing. And yet I could never forget the shell box and your letter from St. Pierre Miquelon. Come, don't you see how much easier it will be — how much more natural — if we put our treasures together: all we have of Maxence, and call him *ours?*"

Suzanne was beginning to yield, but doubtfully. "If it would be proper," she said.

"Not if he were living, of course," replied the other, with assurance. "The laws of the church forbid that. But in the course of a lifetime a husband may have more than one wife. I do not see why, when a husband is dead, two wives should not have him. Do you?"

"I will come," said Suzanne, softly and gratefully. "I am so lonely."

Three years later the two women moved from the Grande Anse into the village, renting the little cottage with the dormer windows in which they have lived ever since. You must look far to find so devoted a pair. They are more than sisters to each other. If their lives have not been happy, as the world judges happiness, they have at least been illumined by two great and abiding loves, — which does not happen often, — that for the dead, and that for each other.

GARLANDS FOR PETTIPAW

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TOWNS, like persons, I suppose, wake up now and then to find themselves famous; but I doubt if any town having this experience could be more amazed by it, more dazed by it, than was Three Rivers, one day last March, when we opened our newspapers from Boston and Montreal and lo, there was our own name staring at us from the front page! Three Rivers is in the Province of Quebec, on the shore of the Bay de Chaleurs; but we receive our metropolitan papers every day, only thirty-six hours off the presses; and this makes us feel closely in touch with the outside world. Until the railroad from Matapedia came through, four years ago, mail was brought by stage, every second day. The coming of the railroad had seemed an important event then; but it had never put Three Rivers on the front page of the Boston *Herald.*

The news-item in question was to the effect that the S. S. *Maid of the North,* Captain Pettipaw of Three Rivers, P. Q., had been torpedoed, forty miles off Fastnet, while en route from Sydney, N. S., to Liverpool, with a cargo of pig-iron. The captain and crew (said the item) had been allowed to take to the boats; but only one of the two boats had been heard from. That

one was in command of the mate, and had been rescued by a trawler.

Captain Pettipaw of Three Rivers! *Our* Captain Pettipaw! How well we knew him; and who among us had ever thought of him as one likely to make Three Rivers figure on the front page of the world's news! Yet this had come to pass; and even amid the anxiety we felt as to the fate of Captain Joe, we could but be agreeably conscious of the distinction that had come to our little community. All that afternoon poor Mrs. Pettipaw's house was thronged with neighbors who hurried over there, newspaper in hand, ready to congratulate or to condole as might seem most called for.

" Poor Mrs. Pettipaw " or " poor Melina " was the way we always spoke of her, partly, I suppose, because of her nine children, and partly because — I hesitate to say it — she was Captain Joe's wife. But now that it seemed so very likely she might be his widow, our hearts went out to her the more. You see Captain Joe was, in our local phrase, " one of those Pettipaws." Pettipaws never seemed to get anywhere or to do anything that mattered. Pettipaws were always behindhand. Pettipaws were always in trouble, one way or another. It was a family characteristic.

Only five or six years ago Captain Joe's new schooner, the *Melina P.,* had broken from her harbor moorings under a sudden gale from the northwest and driven square on the Fiddle Reef, where she foundered before our eyes. Other vessels were anchored close by the *Melina P.;* but not one of them broke loose. All the Captain's savings for years and years had gone

into the new schooner, not to speak of several hundreds borrowed from his fellow-townsmen.

And the very next winter his house had burned to the ground; and the seven children — there were only seven then — had been parceled out amongst the neighbors for six or seven months until, about midsummer, the new house was roofed over and the windows set; and then the family moved in, and there they lived for several more months, "sort of camping-out fashion," as poor Melina cheerfully put it, while Captain Joe was occasionally seen putting on a row of shingles or sawing a board. At last, after the snow had begun to fly, the neighbors came once more to the rescue. A collection was made for the stricken family; carpenters finished the house; a mason built the chimney and plastered the downstairs partitions; curtains were donated for the windows; and the Pettipaws spent the winter in comfort.

The following spring Captain Joe got a position as second officer on a coastwise ship out of Boston, and the affairs of the family began to look up. From that he was promoted to the captaincy of a little freighter plying between Montreal and the Labrador; and the next we knew, he was in command of a large collier sailing out of Sydney, Nova Scotia. Poor Melina appeared in a really handsome new traveling suit, ordered from the big mail order house in Montreal; and the young ones could all go to church the same Sunday, and often did.

For the last year or two we had ceased to make frequent inquiries after Captain Joe; he had dropped

pretty completely out of our life; and the thought that he might be holding a commission of special dangerousness had never so much as entered our minds. But poor Melina's calmness in the face of the news-item surprised everyone. It was like a reproach to her neighbors for not having acknowledged before the worth of the man she had married. It had not required a German torpedo to teach her that. And as for his safety, that apparently caused her no anxiety whatever.

"You couldn't kill the Captain," she repeated, with a quiet, untroubled smile, which was as much as to say that anything else might happen to a Pettipaw, but not that.

The rest of us admired her faith without being able to share it. Poor Melina rarely had leisure to read a newspaper, and she did not know much about the disasters of the war zone. And so, instinctively, everyone began to say the eulogistic things about Captain Joe that had never been said — though now we realized they ought to have been said — while he was with us.

"He was such a good man," said Mrs. Thibault, the barrister's wife. "So devoted to his home. I remember of how he would sit there on the doorstep for hours, watching his little ones at their play. Poor babies! Poor little babies!"

"Such a brave man, too; and so witty!" said John Boutin, our tailor. "The stories he would tell, my! my! Many a day in the shop he'd be telling stories

from dinner till dark, without once stopping for breath as you might say. It passed the time so nice!"

"And devout!" added Mrs. Fougère, the postmistress. "A Christian. He loved to listen to the church-bells. I remember like it was yesterday his saying to me, 'The man,' he said, 'who can hear a church-bell without thinking of religion, is as good as lost, to my thinking.'"

"Not that he went to church very often," said Boutin.

"His knee troubled him," explained Mrs. Fougère.

Early in the evening came the cable message that justified poor Melina's confidence. Eugénie White — the Whites used to be Le Blancs, but since Eugénie came back from Boston, they have taken the more up-to-date name — Eugénie came flying up the street from the railroad station, waving the yellow envelope and spreading the news as she flew. The message consisted of only one word: "Safe"; but it was dated Queenstown, and it bore the signature we were henceforth to be so proud of: Joseph Pettipaw.

Two days later the *Herald* contained a notice of the rescue by a Norwegian freighter of the Captain of the *Maid of the North;* but we had to wait ten days for the full story, which occupied two columns in one of the Queenstown journals and almost as much in the Dublin *Post,* with a very lifelike photograph of Captain Joe. It was a wonderful story, as you may very likely remember, for the American papers gave it plenty of attention a little later.

It had been a calm, warm day, but with an immense sea running. Before entering the war zone Captain Joe had made due preparation for emergencies. The ship's boats were ready to be swung, and in each was a barrel of water and a supply of biscuit and other rations. The submarine was not sighted until it was too late to think of escaping; the engines were reversed; and when the German commander called out through his megaphone that ten minutes would be allowed for the escape of the crew, all hands hurried to the lee side and began piling into the boats. The mate's was lowered away first and cleared safely.

The Captain was about to give the order for the lowering of his own boat, when the only woman in the party cried out that her husband was being left behind. It was the cook, who was indulging in an untimely nap, his noonday labors in the galley being over. In her first excitement Martha Figman had failed to notice his absence, but had made for the boat as fast as she could, carrying her three-year-old child.

"Be quick!" called out the commander of the submarine. "Your time is up!"

"Oh, Captain, Captain, don't leave him," implored the desperate woman. "He's all I have!"

Then Captain Joe did the thing that will go down in history. He seized the little girl and held her aloft in his arms and called out to the Germans:

"In the name of this little child, grant me three more minutes."

"Two!" replied the commander.

Captain Joe leaped to the deck and rushed aft, burst open the cook's cabin, and hauled Danny Figman, quite sound asleep, out of his berth. The poor rascal was only partly dressed, but there was no time to make him presentable. A blanket and a sou'wester had to suffice. Still bewildered, he was dragged on deck and ordered to run for his life.

A few seconds later the boat lowered away with its full quota of passengers; the men took the oars, cleared a hundred yards safely; and then there was a snort, a white furrow through the waves, an explosion; the *Maid of the North* listed, settled, and disappeared. The submarine steamed quickly out of sight; and the two boats were all that was left as witness of what had happened.

On account of the terrible seas that were running, the boats soon became separated; and for sixty-two hours Captain Joe bent his every energy to keeping his boat afloat, for she was in momentary danger of being swamped, until on the third morning the Norwegian was sighted, came to the rescue, and carried the exhausted occupants into Queenstown.

Three Rivers, you may depend, had this story by heart, and backward and forward, long before Captain Joe returned to us; for not only did it appear in those Irish journals, but also on the occasion of the Captain's arrival in New York in several metropolitan papers, written up with great detail, and with a picture of little Tina Figman in the Captain's arms.

" This is the Captain," ran the print under the pic-

ture, "who risked his life that a baby might not be fatherless."

You can imagine how anxious we were by this time in Three Rivers to welcome that Captain home again; not one of us but wanted to make ample amends for the injustice we had done him in the past. But we had to wait several weeks, for even after the owners had brought Captain Joe and his crew back to New York on the St. Louis, still he had to go to Montreal for a ten days' stay, to depose his evidence officially and to wind up the affairs of the torpedoed ship. But at last he was positively returning to us; and extensive preparations were undertaken for his reception.

As he was coming by the St. Lawrence steamer, *Lady of Gaspé,* the principal decorations were massed in the vicinity of the government wharf. If I tell you that well nigh three hundred dollars had been collected for this purpose from the good people of Three Rivers, you can form some idea of the magnitude of the effort. A double row of saplings had been set up along the wharf and led thence to the Palace of Justice; and the full distance, an eighth of a mile, was hung with red and tricolor bunting. Then there were three triumphal arches, one at the head of the wharf, one at the turn into the street, and one in front of the post-office. These arches were very cleverly built, with little turrets at the corners, the timber-work completely covered with spruce-branches; and each arch displayed a motto. Mrs. Fougère and Eugénie White had devised the mottoes, little John Boutin had traced the

letters on cotton, and Mrs. Boutin had painted them. The first read: "Honor to Our Hero." The second was in French, for the reason that half our population still use that language by preference, and it read: "Honneur à notre Héro"; and the third arch bore the one word, ornately inscribed: "Welcome."

All the houses along the way were decorated with geraniums and flags; and as the grass was already very green (it was June) and the willows and silver-oaks beginning to leave out, it may fairly be said that Three Rivers was a beauty spot.

Seeing that no one can tell beforehand when a steamer is going to arrive, the whole town was in its best clothes and ready at an early hour of the morning. The neighbors trooped in at poor Melina's, offering their services in case any of the children still needed combing, curling, or buttoning; and all through the forenoon the young people were climbing to the top of St. Anne's hill to see if there was any sign of the *Lady of Gaspé;* but it was not till three in the afternoon that the church-bell, madly ringing, announced that the long-expected moment was about to arrive.

I wish I could quote for you in full the account of that day's doings which appeared in our local sheet, the Bonaventure *Record,* for it was beautifully written and described every feature as it deserved, reproducing *verbatim* the Mayor's address of welcome, Father Quinnan's speech in the Palace, and the Resolutions drawn up by ten representative citizens and presented to Captain Pettipaw on a handsomely illuminated

scroll, which you may see to-day hanging in the place of honor in his parlor.

But let my readers imagine for themselves the arrival of the steamer, the cheer upon cheer as Captain Joe came gravely down the gang-plank; the affecting meeting between him and poor Melina and the nine little Pettipaws, the littlest of whom he had never seen, and several of whom had grown so in these last four years that he had the names wrong, which caused happy laughter and happy tears on all sides. Then the procession to the Palace! There was an orchestra of four pieces from Cape Cove; and a troop of little girls, in white, scattered tissue-paper flowers along the line of march.

The Mayor began his speech by saying that an honor had come to our little town which would be rehearsed from father to son for generations. Father Quinnan took for his theme the three words: " Father, Husband, Hero "; and he showed us how each of those words, in its highest and best sense, necessarily comprised the other two. And the exercises closed with a very enjoyable piano duet which you doubtless know: " Wandering Dreams," by some foreign composer.

People watched Captain Joe very closely. It would have been only natural if, returning to us in this way, he should have remembered a time, not so long before, when the attitude of his fellow-citizens had been extremely cool. But if he remembered it, he gave no sign; and he smiled at everyone in a grave, thoughtful manner that made one's heart beat high.

"He has aged," whispered Mrs. Fougère. "But his face is noble. It reminds me of Napoleon, somehow."

"To me he looks more like that American we see so often in the papers — Bryan. So much dignity!" This from Mrs. Boutin.

We appreciated the Captain's freedom from condescension the more when we heard from his own lips, that same evening, a recital of the honors that had been showered upon him during the past weeks. The Mayor of Queenstown had had him to dinner; Lady Derntwood, known as the most beautiful woman in Ireland, had entertained him for three days at Derntwood Park, and sent an Indian shawl as a present to his wife. On the *St. Louis* he had sat at the Captain's right hand; in New York he had been interviewed and royally fêted by the newspaper-men; and at Montreal the owners had presented him with a gold watch and a purse of $250. Also, they had offered him another ship immediately.

"Oh, you're going again!" we exclaimed; and the words were repeated from one to another in admiration — "He's going again!" But Captain Joe smiled thoughtfully.

"I told them I didn't mind being torpedoed," he said ('Oh, no! Certainly not! Mind being torpedoed; you! Captain Joe!') "but — "

"But what, Captain?" —

"But I said as I couldn't bear for to see a little child exposed again in an open boat for sixty-four hours."

"But Captain, wouldn't they give you a ship without a child?"

"They *said* they would," he replied, doubtfully, shaking his head.

"Then what will you be doing next?" we asked, mentally reviewing the various fields in which he might add laurels to laurels.

He meditated a little while and then replied: "Home'll suit me pretty good for a spell."

Well, that could be understood, certainly. Indeed, it was to his credit. We remembered Father Quinnan's speech. The husband, the father, had their claim. A little stay at home, in the bosom of loved ones, yes, to be sure, it seemed fitting and right, after the perils of the sea.

And yet, why was it, as we took down the one-eighth-mile of bunting that night, there was a faint but perceptible dampening of our enthusiasm. Perhaps it was the reaction from the strain and excitement of the day, for it had been, there was no denying it, a day of days for Three Rivers; a day, which, as Father Quinnan had said, would be writ in letters of gold in Memory's fair album. This day was ended now, and night came down upon a very proud and very tired little community.

If this were a fancy story instead of a record of things that came to pass last year on the Gaspé Coast, my pen should stop here; but as it is, I feel under a plain obligation to pursue the narrative.

I've no doubt that many other towns in the history of the world have faced precisely the same problem that Three Rivers faced in the months following: namely, what to do with a hero when you have one. Oh, if you could only set them up on a pedestal in front of the Town Hall or the post-office and *keep* them there! A statue is so practicable. Once in so often, say on anniversaries, you can freshen it up, hang it with garlands and bunting, and polish the inscription; and then the school-children can come, and somebody can explain to them about the statue, and why we should venerate it, and what were the splendid qualities of the hero which we are to try to imitate in our own lives. I hope that all cities with statues realize their happy condition.

For two or three weeks after the Great Day Three Rivers still kept its air of festivity. The triumphal arches could be appreciated even from the train, and many travelers, we heard, passing through, leaned out of the windows and asked questions of the station agent.

Wherever Captain Joe went, there followed a little knot of children, listening open-mouthed for any word that might fall from his lips; and you could hear them explaining to one another how it was that a man could be torpedoed and escape undamaged. At first no one of lesser importance than the Mayor or the Bank Manager presumed to walk with him on the street; and he was usually to be seen proceeding in solitary dignity to or from the post-office, head a little

bowed, one hand in the opening of his coat, his step slow and thoughtful, while the children pattered along behind.

But the barrier between the Captain and his fellow-townsmen was entirely of their own creation, it transpired, for he was naturally a sociable man, and now more than ever he craved society, being sure of a deferential hearing. Once established again in Boutin's tailor-shop and pool-parlor, he seemed disposed never to budge from it; and as often as you might pass, day or night, you could hear him holding forth to whatever company happened to be present. It was impossible not to gather many scraps of his discourse, for his voice was as loud as an orator's.

"And Lady Derntwood — no, it was Lady Genevieve, Lady Derntwood's dairter by her first husband and fully as beautiful as her mother, she said to me, 'Captain,' she said, 'when I read that about the little girl — For the sake of this little child, grant me three minutes! — the tears filled my eyes, and I said to my maid, who had brought me my *Times* on the breakfast tray, "Lucienne," I said, "that is a man I should be proud to know!"' — and that's a fact sir, as true as I'm settin' here, for Lucienne herself told me the same thing. A little beauty, that Lucienne: black hair; medium height. We used to talk French together."

Or another time you would hear: "And they said to me, 'Captain,' they says, 'and are you satisfied with the gold watch and chain and with the little purse we have made up for you here, not pretending, of course,

for one minute,' they says, ' that 'tis any measure of the services you have rendered to us or to your country. We ask you,' they says, ' are you satisfied?' And I said, ' I am,' and the fact is, I was, for the watch I'd lost was an Ingersoll, and my clothes put together wouldn't have brought a hundred dollars."

So the weeks went by; and the triumphal arches, on which the mottoes had run a good deal, were taken down and broken up for kindling; and still Captain Joe sat and talked all day long and all night long, too, if only anybody would listen to him. But listeners were growing scarce. His story had been heard too often; and any child in town was able to correct him when he slipped up, which often happened. The two hundred and fifty dollars was spent long since, and now the local merchants were forced to insist once more on strictly cash purchases, and many a day the Pettipaw family must have " done meagre," as the French say. Unless all signs failed, they would be soon living again at the charge of the community. Close your eyes if you like, sooner or later certain grim truths will be borne home to you. A leopard cannot change his spots, nor a Pettipaw his skin. Before our very eyes the honor and glory of Three Rivers, the thing that was to be passed from generation to generation, was vanishing: worse than that, we were becoming ridiculous in our own eyes, which is harder to bear, even, than being ridiculous in the eyes of others.

There was one remedy and only one. It was plain to anybody who considered the situation thoughtfully.

Captain Joe must be got away. So long as your hero is alive, he can only be viewed advantageously at a distance. At all events, if he is a Pettipaw.

It was proposed that we should elect him our local member to the provincial Parliament. It might be managed. We suggested it to him, dwelling upon the opportunities it would afford for the exercise of his special talents which, we said, were being thrown away in a little town like Three Rivers. He conceded that we spoke the truth; "but," he said, after a moment of thoughtful silence, "I am a sailor born and bred, and my health would never stand the confinement. Never!"

Next it was found that we could secure for him the position of purser on the S. S. *Lady of the Gaspé.* But this offer he refused even more emphatically.

"Purser! — Me!" There was evidently nothing more to be said.

Writing to Montreal, Father Quinnan learned that if he so wished Captain Pettipaw might have again the command of the little freighter that ran to the Labrador; and the proposition was laid before him with sanguine expectations. Again he declined.

"The Labrador! Thank you! They wouldn't even know who I was!"

"You could tell them, Captain."

"What good would that do?"

No answer being forthcoming to this demand, still another scheme had to be sought. It was the Mayor who finally saved the day for Three Rivers. He instigated a Patriotic Fund, to which every man, woman

and child contributed what he could, and with the proceeds a three-masted schooner of two hundred tons burden was acquired (she had been knocked down for a song at a sheriff's sale at Campbellton); she was handsomely refitted, rechristened, and presented, late in October, to Captain Joe, as a tribute of esteem from his native town.

It is not for me to say just how grateful the Captain was, at heart; but he accepted the gift with becoming dignity; and before the winter ice closed the Gulf (so expeditiously had our plans been carried out) the *Gloria* was ready to sail with a cargo of dry fish for the Barbadoes.

The evening previous to her departure there was a big farewell meeting in the Palace of Justice, with speeches by the Mayor and Father Quinnan, a piano duet, and an original poem by Eugénie White, beginning:

Sail forth, sail far,
O Captain bold!

It was remarkable to see how all the enthusiasm and fervor of an earlier celebration in that same hall sprang to life again; yes, and with a solemnity added, for this time our hero was going from us. He sat there on the platform by the Mayor, handsome, square-shouldered, his head a little bowed, a thoughtful smile on his lips under the grizzled moustache: he was every inch the noble figure that had stood unflinching before the gates of death; and we realized as

never before what a debt of gratitude we owed him. At last our hero was our hero again.

There is but little more to tell. The next morning, bright and early, everybody was at the wharf to watch the *Gloria* hoist her sails, weigh anchor, and tack out into the bay. There were tears in many, many eyes besides those of poor Mrs. Pettipaw. The sea had a dark look, off there, and one thought of the dangers that awaited any man who sailed out on it at this time of the year.

"Heaven send him good passage!" said Mrs. Thibault, wiping her eyes vigorously.

"Yes, yes, and bring him safe home again, the brave man!" added Mrs. Boutin, earnestly; and all those who heard her breathed a sincere amen to that prayer.

It was sincere. We had wanted Captain Joe to go away; we had actually forced him to go away; yet no sooner was he gone than we prayed he might be brought safe home again. Yes, for when all is said and done, a town that has a hero must love him and cherish him and wish him well. Because we have ours, Three Rivers will always be a better place to live in and to bring up children in: a more inspiring place.

Only, perhaps, if Mrs. Boutin had spoken less impulsively, she would have added one or two qualifying clauses to her petition. For instance, she might have added: "Only not too soon, and not for too long at once!" But for my part, I believe that will be understood by the good angel who puts these matters on record, up there.

A FISHERMAN'S HOUSE

FLY, MY HEART!

FLY, MY HEART!

THEY called her Sabine Bob—"S'been Bob"—because her real name was Sabine Anne Boudrot; and being a Boudrot in Petit Espoir is like being a Smith or a Brown in our part of the world, only ten times more so, for in that little fishing-port of Cape Breton, down in the Maritime Provinces, practically everybody belongs to the abounding tribe. Boudrot, therefore, having ceased to possess more than a modicum of specificity (to borrow a term from the logicians), the custom has arisen of tagging the various generations and households of Boudrots with the familiar name of the father that begat them.

And thus Sabine Anne Boudrot, "old girl" of fifty, was known only as Sabine Bob, and Mary Boudrot, her friend, to whom she was dictating a love-letter on a certain August evening, was known only as Mary Willee — with the accent so strongly on the final syllable that it sounded like Marywil-Lee. Sabine Bob was in service; always had been. Mary kept house for an invalid father. But there was no social distinction between the two.

Mary Willee bent close over the sheet of ruled notepaper and laboriously traced out the words, dipping her pen every few seconds with professional punctiliousness and screwing up her homely face into all sorts

of homely expressions: tongue now tight-bitten between her teeth, now working restlessly in one cheek, now hard pressed against bulging lips. There was agony for both of them in this business of producing a love-letter: agony for Mary Willee because she had never fully mastered the art of writing, and the shaping just-so of the letters and above all the spelling brought out beads of sweat on her forehead; agony for Sabine Bob because her heart was so burstingly full and words were so powerless to ease that bursting.

Besides, how could she be sure, really, positively *sure,* that Mary Willee was recording there on that paper the very words, just those very words and none others, which she was confiding to her! Writing was a tricky affair. Tricky, like the English language which Sabine Bob was using, against her will, for the reason that Mary Willee had never learned to write French. French was natural. In French one could say what one thought: it felt homelike. In English one had to be stiff.

" Read me what I have said so far," directed Sabine Bob, and she held to the seat of her chair with her bony hands and listened.

Mary Willee began, compliantly. " ' My dearling Thomas ' " —

Sabine Bob interrupted. " The number of the day comes first. Always! I brought you the calendar with the day marked on it."

" I wrote it here," said Mary Willee. " You need not be so anxious. I have done letters before this."

" Oh, but everything is so important! " ejaculated Sabine, with tragedy in her voice. " Now begin again."

" ' My dearling Thomas. It is bad times here. So much fogg all ways. i was houghing potatoes since 2 days and they looks fine and i am nitting yous some socks for when yous come back. i hope you is getting lots of them poggiz.' "

Mary Willee hesitated. " I ain't just sure how to spell that word," she confessed.

" Pogeys? "

" Yes."

" You ought to be. What for did they send you to the convent all those four years? "

" It was only three. And the nuns never taught us no such things as about pogey-fishing. But no matter. Thomas Ned will know what you mean, because that's what he's gone fishing after."

And she continued: " ' I miss yous awful some days. when you comes back in octobre we's git married sure.' "

She looked up. " That's all you told me so far."

Sabine's face was drawn into furrows of intense thought. " How many more lines is there to fill? "

" Seven."

" Well, then, tell him I was looking at the little house what his auntie Sophie John left him and thinking how nice it would be when there was some front steps and the shimney was fix' and there were curtains to the windows in front and some geraniums and I t'ink I will raise some hens because they are such good com-

pany running in and out all day when he will be away pogey-fishing but perhaps when we're married he won't have to go off any more because his healt' is put to danger by it and how would it do, say, if he got a little horse and truck with the hundred and fifty dollars I got saved up and did work by the day for people ashore and then " — she paused for breath.

" Is that too much to write? " she remarked with sudden anxiety.

" It is," replied Mary Willee, firmly. " You can say two things, and then good-by."

Two things! Sabine Bob stared at the little yellow circle of light on the smoky ceiling over the lamp; then out of the window into the darkness. Two things more; and there were so many thousand things to say! Her mind was a blank.

" I am waiting," Mary reminded her, poising her pen pitilessly.

" Tell him," gasped out Sabine, " tell him — I t'ink I raise some hens."

Letter by letter the pregnant sentence was inscribed, while Sabine stared at the pen with paralyzed attention, as if her doom were being written in the Book of Judgment; and now the time had come for the second thing! Tears of helplessness stood in her eyes.

"Ask him," she blurted out, " would the hundred and fifty dollars what I got buy a nice little horse and truck."

Mary Willee paused. She seemed embarrassed.

" Write it," commanded the other.

Mary Willee looked almost frightened. "Must you say that about the money?" she asked, weakly.

"Write the words I told you," insisted Sabine. "This is my letter, not yours."

Reluctantly the younger woman set down the sentence; then added the requisite and necessary "Good-by, from Sabine."

"Is there room for a few kisses?" asked the fiancée.

"One row."

Sabine seized the pen greedily and holding it between clenched fingers added a line of significant little lop-sided symbols. Then while her secretary prepared the letter for mailing, she wiped her forehead with a large blue handkerchief which she refolded and returned to the skirt-pocket that contained her rosary and her purse. She put on her little old yellow-black hat again and made ready to go.

"Now to the post-office," she said. "How glad Thomas Ned will be when he gets it!"

"I am sure he will," said Mary; and if there was any doubt in her tone, it was not perceived by her friend, who suddenly flung her arms about her in a gush of happy emotion.

"Dieu, que c'est beau, l'amour!" she exclaimed.

The sentiment was not a new one in the world; but it was still a new one, and very wonderful, to Sabine Bob: Sabine Bob who had never been pretty, even in youthful days, who had never had any nice clothes or gone to parties, but had just scrubbed and washed and swept, saved what she could, gone to church on

Sundays, bought a new pair of shoes every other year.

Not that she had ever thought of pitying herself. She was too practical for that; and besides, there had always been plenty to be happy about. The music in church, for instance, which thrilled and dissolved and comforted her; and the pictures there, which she loved to gaze at, especially the one of Our Lady above the altar.

And then there were children! No one need be very unhappy, it seemed to Sabine Bob, in a world where there were children. She never went out without first putting a few little hard, colored candies in her pocket to dispense along the street, over gates and on front steps. The tinier the children were the more she loved them. Every spring in Petit Espoir there was a fresh crop of the very tiniest of all; and towards these — little pink bundles of softness and helplessness — she felt something of the adoration which those old Wise Men felt who had followed the star. If she had had spices and frankincense, Sabine Bob would have offered it, on her knees. But in lieu of that, she brought little knitted sacques and blankets and hoods.

Such had been Sabine Bob's past; and that a day was to come in her life when a handsome young man should say sweet, loving things to her, present her with perfumery, bottle on bottle, ask her to be his wife, bless you, she would have been the first to scout the ridiculous idea — till six months ago! Thomas Ned was a small man, about forty, squarely built, with pink cheeks, long lashes, luxuriant moustache; a pretty man;

a man who cut quite a figure amongst the girls and (many declared) could have had his pick of them. Why, why, had he chosen Sabine Bob? When she considered the question thoughtfully, she found answers enough, for she was not a girl who underestimated her own worth.

"Thomas is sensible," she explained to Mary Willee. "He knows better than to take up with one of those weak, sickly young things that have nothing but a pretty face and stylish clothes to recommend them. I can work; I can save; I can make his life easy. He knows he will be well looked out for."

If Mary Willee could have revised this explanation, she refrained from doing so. It would have taken courage to do so at that moment, for Sabine Bob was so happy! It was almost comical for any one to be so happy as that! Sabine realized it and laughed at herself and was happier still. Morning, noon, and night, during those first mad, marvelous days after she had promised to become Madame Thomas Ned, she was singing a bit of gay nonsense she had known from childhood:

Vive la Canadienne,
Vole, vole, vole, mon coeur!

"Fly, fly, oh fly, my heart," trolled Sabine Bob; and every evening, until the time came when he must depart for the pogey-fishing, in May, he had come and sat with her in the kitchen; he would smoke; she would knit away at a pair of mittens for him (oh, such small

hands as that Thomas had!), and about ten o'clock she would fetch a glass of blueberry wine and some currant cookies. How nice it was to be doing such things for some one — of one's own!

She hovered over him like a ministering spirit, beaming and tender. This was what she had starved for all her life without knowing it: to serve some one of her own! Not for wages now; for love! She flung herself on the altar of Thomas and burned there with a clear ecstatic flame.

And now that he had been away four months, pogey-fishing, she would sometimes console herself by getting out the five picture-postcards he had sent her and muse upon the scenes of affection depicted there and pick out, word by word, the brief messages he had written. With Mary Willee's assistance she had memorized them; and they were words of sempiternal devotion; and there were little round love-knows-what's in plenty; and on one card he called her his little wife; and that was the one she prized the most. Wife! Sabine Bob!

That no card arrived in answer to her August letter did not surprise her, for the pogeymen often did not put into port for weeks at a time; and anyhow the day was not far away, now, when the season would be over and those who had gone up from Petit Espoir would come down again.

So the weeks slipped by. October came. The pogey-fishermen returned.

She waited for Thomas Ned in the kitchen that first evening, palpitating with expectancy; and he did not

come. During the sleepless night that followed she conjured up excuses for him. He had had one of his attacks of rheumatism. His mother had been ill and had required his presence at home. The next evening he would come, oh certainly, and explain everything. Attired in her best, she sat and waited a second evening; then a third. There was no sign of him.

From Mary Willie she learned that Thomas had arrived with the others; that he appeared in perfect health, never handsomer; also that his mother was well.

"Oh, it cannot be that anything has happened," cried Sabine, with choking tears. "Surely it will all be explained soon!" But there was a tightening about her heart, a black premonition of ill to come.

She continued to wait. She was on the watch for him day and night. At least he would pass on the street, and she could waylay him! Every time she heard footsteps or voices she flew to the kitchen door. When her work was done, she would hurry out to the barn, where there was a little window commanding a good view of the harbor-front; and there she would sit, muffled in a shawl, for hours, hunger gnawing at her heart, her eyes dry and staring, until her teeth began to chatter with cold and nervousness.

He never passed. Some one met him taking the back road into the village. He was purposely avoiding her.

When Sabine Bob realized that she was deserted by the man she loved, thrown aside without a word, she suffered unspeakably; but her native good sense saved

her from making any exhibition of her grief. She knew better than to make a fool of herself. If there was one thing she dreaded worse than death it was being laughed at. She was a self-respecting girl; she had her pride. And no one witnessed the spasms, the cyclones, which sometimes seized her in the seclusion of her little attic bedroom. These were not the picturesque, grandiose sufferings of high tragedy; there was small resemblance between Sabine Bob and Carthaginian Dido; Sabine's agonies were stark and cruel and ugly, unsoftened by poetry. But she kept them to herself.

She did her work as before. But she did not sing; and perhaps she nicked more dishes than usual, for her hands trembled a good deal. But she kept her lips tight shut. And she never went out on the street if she could help it.

So a month passed. Two months. And then one evening Mary Willee came running in breathless with news for her: news that made her skin prickle and her blood, after one dizzy, faint moment, drum hotly in her temples.

Thomas Ned was paying attentions to Tina Lejeune, that blonde young girl from the Ponds. He had taken her to a dance. He had bought a scarf for her and a bottle of perfumery. He had taken her to drive. They had been seen walking together several times in the dark on the upper street.

"Does he say he is going to marry her?' asked Sabine Bob, with dry lips.

"I do not know that. *She* says so. She says they are to be married soon."

"Does she know about — about me?"

"Yes, but she says —" Mary Willee stopped short in embarrassment.

"Says what! Tell me! Tell me at once!" commanded Sabine, fiercely. "What does she say!"

"She says Thomas thought you had a lot of money. He was deceived, he said."

Sabine broke out in a passion of indignation. "I never deceived him: never, never! I never once said anything about money. He never asked me anything. It's a lie. I tell you, it's a lie!"

Mary quailed visibly, unable to disguise a tell-tale look of guilt.

"What is the matter with you, Mary Willee!" cried Sabine. "You are hiding something. You know something you have not told me!"

Mary replied, in a very frightened voice: "Once he asked me if you had any money. I did not think he was really in earnest, so I told him you had saved a thousand dollars. Oh, I didn't mean any harm. I only said it to be agreeable. And later I was afraid to tell the truth, for it was only two or three days later he asked you to marry him, and you were so happy."

Mary Willee hid her face in her hands and waited for the storm to break upon her; but it did not break. The room was very quiet. At last she heard Sabine moving about, and she looked up again. Sabine was putting on her hat and coat.

"Sabine! Sabine!" she gasped. "What are you doing!"

Sabine Bob turned quietly and stood for a moment gazing at her without a word. Then she said:

"Mary Willee, you are a bad girl and I can never forgive you; but if Tina Lejeune thinks she is going to marry Thomas Ned, she will find out that she is mistaken. That is a thing that will not happen."

Mary recoiled, terrified, at the pitiless, menacing smile on the other woman's face; but before she could say anything Sabine Bob had stalked out of the house into the darkness.

She climbed the hill to the back road, stumbling often, blinded more by her own fierce emotions than by the winter night; she fought her way westward against the bitter wind that was rising; then turned off by the Old French Road, as it was called, toward the Ponds.

It was ten o'clock at night; stars, but no moon. She saw a shadow approaching in the darkness from the opposite direction: it was a man, short and squarely-built. With a sickening weakness she sank down against the wattle fence at the side of the road. He passed her, so close that she could have reached out and touched him. But he had not seen. She got up and hurried on.

By and by she saw ahead of her the little black bulk of a house from the tiny window of which issued a yellow glow. The house stood directly on the road. She went quietly to the window and looked in. A young

girl was sitting by a bare table, her head supported by the palms of her hands. Sabine knew the weak white face and hated it. She made her way to the door and knocked. There was a smothered, startled exclamation; then the rustle of some one moving.

"Who is it?" inquired a timid voice.

"Let me in and I will tell you," responded the woman outside, in a voice the more menacing because of its control.

"My mother is not at home to-night. She is over at the widow Babinot's. If you go over there you will find her."

"It is you I wish to see. Open the door!"

There was no answer. Sabine turned the knob and entered. At the sight of her the blonde girl gave a cry of dismay and retreated behind the table, trembling.

"What do you want?" she gasped.

"We have an account to settle together, you and me," said Sabine, with something like a laugh.

"Account?" said the other, bracing herself, but scarcely able to articulate. "What account? I have not done you any harm. Before God I have not done you any harm."

Sabine laughed mockingly. "So you think there is no harm in taking away from me the man I was going to marry?"

"I did not take him away," said Tina, faintly.

"You did! You did take him away!" cried Sabine,

fiercely. "He was mine; it was last March he promised to marry me; any one can tell you that. I have witnesses. I have letters. Everything I tell you can be proved. He belongs to me just as much as if we had been before a priest already; and if you think you can take him away from me, you will find out you are wrong!"

For a few seconds the paralyzed girl before her could not utter a word; then she stammered out:

"He told me you had deceived him about money."

Sabine gave an inarticulate cry of rage, like a wild beast at bay. "It's a lie! A lie! I never deceived him. It's he who deceived me; but let me tell you this: when a woman like me promises to marry a man, she keeps her word. Do you understand? She keeps her word! I am going to marry Thomas Ned. He cannot escape me. I will go to the priest. I will go to the lawyer. There are plenty of ways."

The blonde girl sank trembling into a chair.

"He cannot marry you," she gasped. "He cannot. He cannot."

"No?" cried Sabine, with ringing mockery. "And why not?"

Tina's lips moved inaudibly. She moistened them with her tongue and made a second attempt.

"Because —" she breathed.

"Yes? Yes?"

"Because — he must marry me." She buried her head in her hands and sobbed.

Sabine Bob strode to the cringing girl, seized her by

the shoulders, forcing her up roughly against the back of the chair, and broke out with a ruthless laugh:

"Must! Must! You don't say so! And why, tell me, must he marry you?"

The white girl raised her eyes for one instant to the other's face; and there was a look in them of mute pleading and confession, a look that was like a death-cry for pity. The look shot through Sabine's turgid consciousness like a white-hot dagger. She staggered back as if mortally stricken, supporting herself against a tall cupboard, staring at the girl, whose head had now sunk to the table again and whose body was shaking with spasmodic sobs. It was one of the moments when destinies are written.

At such moments we act from something deeper, more elemental, than will. The best or the worst in us leaps out — or perhaps neither one nor the other but merely that thing in us that is most essentially ourselves.

Sabine stared at the poor girl whose terrifying, wonderful secret had just been revealed to her, and she felt through all her being a sense of shattering and disintegration; and suddenly she was there, beside Tina, on the arm of her chair; and she brought the girl's head over against her bosom and held her very tight in her eager old arms, patting her shoulders and stroking her soft hair, while the tears rained down her cheeks and she murmured, soothingly:

"Pauvre petite!" and again and again, "Pauvre petite! Ma pauvre petite!"

Tina abandoned herself utterly to the other's impassioned tenderness; and for a long time the two sat there, tightly clasped, silent, understanding.

Sabine Bob had no word of blame for the unhappy girl. Vaguely she knew that she ought to blame her; very vaguely she remembered that girls like this were bad girls; but that did not seem to make any difference. Instead of indignation she felt something very like humility and reverence.

"Yes, he must marry you," she said at last, very simply and gently.

"Oh, if he only would!" sobbed Tina.

"What!" cried Sabine, in amazement.

"He says such cruel things to me," confessed the girl. "He knows, oh, he does know I never loved any man but himself; never, never any other man, nor ever will!"

Sabine's eyes opened upon new vistas of man's perfidiousness. And yet, in spite of everything, how one could love them! She felt an immense compassion toward this poor girl who had loved not wisely but so all-givingly.

"I will go to him," she said, resolutely. "I will tell him he must marry you; and I will say that if he does not, I will tell every person in Petit Espoir what a wicked thing he has done."

Tina leaped to her feet in terror. "Oh, no, no!" she pleaded. "No one must know."

Sabine understood. Not the present only, but the future must be thought of.

"And if he was forced like that to marry me, he would hate me," pursued the girl, who saw things with the pitiless clear foresight that desperation gives. " He must marry me from his own choice. Oh, if I could only make him choose; but to-night he said NO! and went away, very angry. I'm afraid he will never come back again."

" Yes, he will," said Sabine Bob. There was a grim smile on her lips; and she squared her shoulders as if to give herself courage for some dreaded ordeal. " There is a way."

But to the startled, eager question in the other's eyes, she vouchsafed no answer. She came to her and put her hands firmly on her shoulders.

" Tina, will you promise not to believe anything you hear them say about me? Will you promise to keep on loving me just the same? "

The girl clung to her. " Oh, yes, yes," she promised. "Always! " and then, in a shy whisper, she added: "And some day — I will not be the only one to love you."

Sabine Bob gave her a quick, almost violent kiss, and went out, not stopping for even a word of good-night. And the next day she put her plan into execution. There was a perfectly relentless logic about Sabine Bob. She saw a thing to do; and she went and did it.

As soon as her dinner dishes were washed and put away, she donned her old brown coat and the little yellow-black hat that had served her winter and summer from time immemorial, and proceeded to make a

dozen calls on her friends, up and down the street. Wherever she went she talked, volubly, feverishly. She railed; she threatened; she vociferated; and the object of her vociferations was Thomas Ned. He had promised to marry her; and he had deserted her; and she would have the law on him! Marry her he must, now, whether he would or no.

"See that word?" she demanded, displaying her sheaf of compromising post-cards. "That word is *wife;* and the man who calls me wife must stick to it. I am not a woman to be made a fool of!"

So she stormed away, from house to house. Her friends tried to pacify her; but the more they tried, the more venom she put into her threats. And soon the news spread through the whole town. Nothing else was talked of.

"She's crazy," people said. "But she can make trouble for him, if she wants to, no doubt about it."

Sabine laughed grimly to herself. She was going to succeed. The scheme would work. She knew the kind of man Thomas Ned was: full of shifts. He had proved that already. He would never face a thing squarely. He would look for a way out.

She was right. It was only ten days later, at high mass, that the success of her strategy was tangibly proved. At the usual point in the service for such announcements, just before the sermon, Father Beauclerc, standing in the pulpit, called the banns for Thomas Boudrot, of Petit Espoir, North, and Tina Mélanie Brigitte Lejeune, of the Ponds.

The announcement caused a sensation. An audible murmur of amazement, not to say consternation, went up from all quarters of the edifice, floor and galleries; even the altar boys exchanged whispers with one another; and there was a great stretching of necks in the direction of Sabine Bob, who sat there in her uncushioned pew, very straight and very red, with set lips, while her rough old fingers played nervously with the rosary in her lap.

This was her victory! She had never felt the ugliness of her fifty years so cruelly before. A bony, ridiculous old maid, making a fool of herself in public! That was the sum of it! And all her life she had been so careful, so jealously careful, not to do anything that might cause her to be laughed at!

She could hear some of the whispers that were being exchanged in neighboring pews. "Poor old thing!" people were saying. "But how could she expect anybody would want to marry her at her age!"

A trembling like ague seized her, and she felt suddenly very cold and very very weak. She shut her eyes, for things were beginning to flicker and whirl; and when she opened them again, they were caught and held by the picture above the high altar.

It was the Mother. The Mother and the Little One. He lay in her arms and smiled.

The tears gushed up in Sabine Bob's eyes, and a smile of wonderful tenderness and peace broke over the harsh lines of her face and transfigured it, just for one instant. It was a victory; it *was* a victory;

though nobody knew it but herself; just herself, and one other, and — perhaps —

Sabine still gazed at the picture, poor old Sabine Bob in her brown coat and faded little yellow-black hat; and the Eternal Mother returned the gaze of the Eternal Mother, smiling; and it didn't matter very much after that — how could it? — what people might think or say in Petit Espoir.

Once more, that afternoon, as she slashed the suds over the dishes, Sabine Bob was singing. You could hear her way down there on the street, so buoyant and so merry was her voice:

Long live the Canadian maid;
Fly, fly, oh fly, my heart!

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